

**Saturday
10 September 2022**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Saturday 10 September 2022

House of Commons

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The House met at One o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Following the meeting of the Accession Council and the Principal Proclamation earlier today, I will first take the Oath to His Majesty. Time constraints mean only a small number of hon. Members are able to take the Oath or make the Affirmation today. Those Members have already been contacted by my office. There will be further opportunities for all hon. Members to take the Oath or make the Affirmation following Her late Majesty's funeral. There is no procedural requirement to do so.

Once we have concluded our tributes at approximately 10 pm, a Humble Address to His Majesty will be moved formally in the terms set out on the Order Paper.

Members Sworn

Mr Speaker: I will now take the Oath of Allegiance before inviting other hon. Members to do so.

The Speaker first, alone, standing on the upper step of the Chair, took and subscribed the Oath required by law.

Mr Speaker: We will start with the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley.

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Sir Peter James Bottomley, *for* Worthing West

Right honourable Harriet Ruth Harman, Camberwell and Peckham

Right honourable Elizabeth Mary Truss, South West Norfolk

Right honourable Penny Mary Mordaunt, Portsmouth North

Right honourable Wendy Morton, Aldridge-Brownhills

Right honourable Alister William Jack, Dumfries and Galloway

Right honourable Christopher Heaton-Harris, Daventry

Right honourable Keir Starmer, Holborn and St Pancras
Thangam Elizabeth Rachel Debbonaire, Bristol West

Right honourable Sir Alan Campbell, Tynemouth

Right honourable Ian Blackford, Ross, Skye and Lochaber

Owen George Thompson, Midlothian

Right honourable Sir Edward Jonathon Davey, Kingston and Surbiton

Wendy Anne Chamberlain, North East Fife

Right honourable Sir Jeffrey Mark Donaldson, Lagan Valley

Right honourable Elizabeth Saville Roberts, Dwyfor Meirionnydd

Stephen Anthony Farry, North Down

Right honourable Thérèse Anne Coffey, Suffolk Coastal

Right honourable Theresa Mary May, Maidenhead

Right honourable Dame Eleanor Fulton Laing, Epping Forest

Right honourable Dame Rosalie Winterton, Doncaster Central

Right honourable Nigel Martin Evans, Ribble Valley

Right honourable Brandon Kenneth Lewis, Great Yarmouth

Right honourable Jacob William Rees-Mogg, North East Somerset

Ranil Malcolm Jayawardena, North East Hampshire

Right honourable Michael Tyrone Ellis, Northampton North

Right honourable John Healey, Wentworth and Dearne

Right honourable David Lindon Lammy, Tottenham

Right honourable Yvette Cooper, Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford

Right honourable Patrick Bosco McFadden, Wolverhampton South East

Tributes to Her Late Majesty the Queen

1.17 pm

Mr Speaker: I now invite the House to resume its tributes to Her late Majesty. I expect to conclude tributes at 10 o'clock, when I shall invite Ministers to move the motion for a Humble Address to His Majesty. A hundred and eighty-two Members contributed yesterday, and many want to contribute today. I hope Members will therefore keep to the informal time limit of three minutes. I invite the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Thérèse Coffey, to speak.

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing Ministers to participate in this debate. I really appreciate it, and I know that my constituents from Suffolk Coastal will, too.

Her late Majesty the Queen was a constant across the decades. As a child, I remember the silver jubilee; there were also celebrations for the golden, diamond and platinum jubilees, and commemorations of VE Day. The Queen brought the nation together at sad times, including for events at the Cenotaph, but there was also celebration of what makes our country great. The very first time my mother watched television was the coronation. Somebody nearby in her town of Wrexham bought a TV, and people came from the surrounding streets to watch the Queen being crowned.

The Queen's impact was felt right around the world. I saw that when I was Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. In Kenya, in Uganda, and wherever I went, the Queen was held in the highest regard, and there were always representations made to her. Her impact was felt in world war two as well; I think of the broadcasts by the princesses. As a youth, in 1995—a long time ago—I went as a representative of the United Kingdom to the Anne Frank house, where there were pictures of the princesses. In her diary, on 21 April 1944, Anne Frank wished a happy 18th birthday to Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth of York, and wondered to which prince they would marry off this beauty. I am confident that our new King will also have that constancy, and that impact around the world, not only because of his work on the environment, but because he will sincerely continue the traditions of his mother.

Turning to Suffolk Coastal, I pay tribute to Rendlesham's savvy parish council, which always puts on its parish fête on the same day as the trooping of the colour so we get the line-up of all the flypasts, whereas many other places pay for it. The Queen seemed to have a particular affection for Benjamin Britten and opera; she opened the 20th Snape Maltings festival in 1967, and when it burned down a couple of years later she came back to, in effect, reopen it. That affection carried on. Her love of music may not always have been evident, but people in this Chamber and elsewhere will know the special arrangement of the national anthem written by Benjamin Britten. Her love of music was further attested to by the fact that she authorised the name of only one other person on the coinage of the realm: Benjamin Britten.

I want to say on behalf of the people of Suffolk Coastal how much they will miss Queen Elizabeth II, and to pledge their loyalty and support to King Charles III.

1.21 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): This morning, the Accession Council met to proclaim the new sovereign, His Majesty King Charles III. It was an immense honour to bear witness to that historic proclamation for the Privy Council and for my constituents in Normanton, Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley. For us in Pontefract, it is particularly important to mark the arrival of the new King, who as Prince was a great supporter of the Prince of Wales Hospice in Pontefract—a considerably more positive association than our last constituency connection with the accession of a monarch, which involved Pontefract castle, Richard II and a rather unfortunate end.

It is an honour to speak in the second day of tributes to Her late Majesty, a truly remarkable Queen. Everyone has their memories. For one of my constituents, it was the parcels that the young Princess Elizabeth sent in 1947, sharing wedding gifts across the country. She says:

"I have always remembered it... There was a pineapple in it and we didn't even know what it was."

For those of us who were children in the 1970s, it was the silver jubilee. For us, the Queen meant street parties; everyone made such a big fuss about it being 25 years that frankly we thought she had already been Queen forever. That is what she was for us and subsequent generations: our forever Queen, a constant who would serve our country for another 45 years.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) and the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) have all described how the Queen invited them to tea when they became Privy Counsellors and when they left office. The remarkable thing is that she did that for dozens of us—for every departing Cabinet Minister or party leader.

I was invited after the 2010 election. We drank tea, and the Queen asked me how we had managed being Cabinet Ministers with kids. "Chaotically," I said. We talked about housing as well. Others have described the kindness that she showed in those meetings, but I think it was much more than that. She did not invite us when we were on the way up; she did not invite us when we were playing a constitutional role; she invited us only when it was all over and the cameras had gone home. Most of us do not like to talk about our downfall. I said, "It was very kind of you to do this." She said that it was to recognise and say thank you for public service. That said much more about her than it did about the service that any of her Cabinet Ministers had shown; it showed how, privately even more than publicly, she believed in selfless duty and valuing public service to our country.

And yes, the Queen showed that sense of mischief. I do not think anyone has yet told the story that John Prescott—Lord Prescott—tells of his first Privy Council meeting with Clare Short, who was International Development Secretary at the time. According to John, she had arrived late with a large handbag and pile of papers. As they stood to hear the Privy Council business being read out, suddenly Clare's phone started to ring. Clare rummaged fast but was unable to find it in her

handbag before the noise eventually subsided and the call remained unanswered. The Queen simply said, “Oh dear! I do hope that wasn’t anyone important.”

Many hon. Members rightly paid tribute yesterday to the address that the Queen gave just two weeks into the first lockdown. Thousands of people had already died and thousands more were being rushed to hospital, unable to breathe. Schools were closed, families were split up and churches, mosques and synagogues were all shut. Parliament had closed and the Prime Minister was very ill. All the institutions that we relied on and took for granted were either closed or under strain—except the Queen. Only the Queen, our forever Queen who had been a constant through ups and downs, could give us that message.

It was not just about the Queen’s authority in invoking those wartime sacrifices. She captured the yearning of a country to come together just as we needed to stay apart. She invoked British values, saying that

“the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling still characterise this country”—

words she used to describe us, but that so many of us have used to describe her. That is why she was so important to us: because she embodied the values that we still want to see as British—the resilience, the strength, the kindness, the fairness, the common decency, the determined optimism that things will get better because we will make them so, and that selfless duty and commitment to public service. She held up a mirror to our nation of what we want to be. She may not be the forever Queen that I still believed in at the silver jubilee, but those values that she stood up for were forever values, and those are her legacy now.

1.26 pm

Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con): My thoughts and prayers and those of my Cannock Chase constituents are with His Majesty the King and all the royal family, who have lost a much-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. We have lost a Queen who dutifully served our country through every high and low that we have faced. From war to the pandemic, Her late Majesty has remained the constant, providing quiet but steadfast leadership and showing that whatever we face, our great country can come together.

Like many Members of this House, I had the real privilege of meeting the Queen. The first time I met her was when I was appointed Deputy Chief Whip. We have heard during these tributes from several former Whips about the various duties that are undertaken. My first meeting with the Queen was for the wand swapping—the exchange of the wands of office between the outgoing and incoming deputy. Among Members of this House who know me well, I am not known for being very quiet, but I was so nervous. I was really worried that I would mess up all the protocols, so ahead of going in I just went totally silent. Colleagues and friends were there, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew), who was a bit baffled. He turned round and said, “Gosh, where has Amanda gone?”

As many hon. Members have remarked, the Queen had an amazing ability to put you at ease, including with that smile. She was loved and admired the length and breadth of our country, including in Cannock Chase. That love and admiration stretched across the

world, as I saw on overseas visits. That includes our overseas territories, a number of which I have visited in the past year. Whether it was in a snowstorm at Goose Green in the Falklands, where we both were, or in the heat of Anguilla, I could not help but be moved every time the national anthem was played—I could see and feel the admiration felt by the people of the overseas territories.

In this place, we chose to go into public life because we want to make our great country better for those we serve. In Her late Majesty, we could not have had a better example to follow. Her unparalleled record of public service stands as an inspiration. We have been lucky to have her wise counsel and calm leadership over the past 70 years. For the country, and around the world, Her late Majesty was a figurehead for all that the United Kingdom represents. I offer His Majesty the King and his family my heartfelt condolences and the condolences of my Cannock Chase constituents. As we all mourn the loss of Queen Elizabeth II, we know that His Majesty the King had an excellent mentor and will continue her great legacy. God save the King.

1.30 pm

Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): Her Majesty the Queen embodied a shining example of duty, a sympathy and understanding of the people of our country and of the Commonwealth and beyond, and exceptionally good judgment. I have to confess that I have not always felt supportive of the principle of the monarchy. As a young local councillor, I once attended a function at which the loyal toast to the Queen was proposed and, foolishly, I declined to take part, remaining firmly in my seat. My non-participation led to comment in our local paper and a strong backlash from the people I represented. I learnt two lessons from that episode: first, that the unnecessary courting of controversy was not a good thing to do; and, secondly, that the people had enormous respect and affection for our constitutional monarchy and for the Queen in particular. One question I was asked at the time was, “So what is your alternative?” and I must confess that I struggled to find an answer. By the time I was elected to this House, more than a decade later, I had come to the view that Her Majesty and the monarchy were a much-valued part of our national life. Her dedication and sense of duty in the ensuing years has served to strongly confirm me in that view.

1.32 pm

Grant Shapps (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con): Like many in this House, I had the opportunity to meet and speak to the Queen on numerous occasions, but unfortunately the relationship did not start particularly auspiciously. I was invited to Buckingham Palace for what, as other Members will know, is an ancient, complex process of becoming a Privy Councillor. It was so complicated that I was called to a side room with five colleagues to have the process explained. We were told, “You will enter a large hall in Buckingham Palace, where Her Majesty will stand at one end. You will kneel on the red cushions, which go back some distance, on your right knees, holding a Bible in your right hand. You will switch that to your left hand, then take the Sovereign’s hand with your right hand and brush her hand, then stand and say, ‘Your Majesty.’” I thought, “Brush her

[Grant Shapps]

hand? Was that an instruction to brush her hand with my hand? With my sleeve? Or with a handkerchief?" As I was about to ask, we were called into the performance of the great ceremony itself. I thought, "No matter, I am fifth in the line to become a Privy Councillor, so I will watch my colleagues."

My colleagues were all swearing on the New Testament, but as I am Jewish I was swearing on the Old Testament. I was at the back of the line and I thought that I would watch what was happening. Unfortunately, as we went into this large hallway, I found that it was so long that I could not see what was happening in the ceremony at the front. As I got closer, the field of view narrowed and the girth of my colleague in front of me widened, and I still could not see what brushing the hand actually entailed. With palpitations, I nervously knelt in front of Her Majesty the Queen, on the red cushion right before her. I switched the Bible, the Pentateuch, from my right to my left hand, and stretched out my right hand. She stretched out her bare, ungloved right hand and, to my surprise, moved it towards my face. It moved towards my lips. I pursed my lips. And it stuck! For what felt like an age she tried to pull it away and then, suddenly, "pop!", her hand pulled away. I wanted the ground beneath me in Buckingham Palace to swallow me whole, but I remembered to stand up. "Your Majesty," I quavered. She looked me right in the eyes with those wonderful sparkling eyes, as if both to acknowledge what had happened and also to forgive me in one turn. She said, "Ye...es!". Mr Speaker, we never spoke of it again. God save the King.

Mr Speaker: I call Siobhain McDonagh.

1.35 pm

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I never expected to be called so early; I was so enjoying everybody's contributions.

I rise to pay my respects on behalf of my constituents in Mitcham and Morden, who, like people in the rest of our country and Commonwealth, are united in mourning. So much has been said in this House and, indeed, from pubs to podiums around the world, and yet such is the magnitude of the moment that it still feels like there is so much left to say.

Queen Elizabeth was the historic figurehead of modern times, a leader—a female leader, may I say—incomparably devoted to her service and her people. As the longest-reigning monarch, she has been ever present, a constant figure of reassurance throughout all our lives. Perhaps that is why the grief feels so personal for so many.

Her Majesty's leadership transcended generations. She navigated a century of societal changes, from her coronation in post-war Britain to every move of her reign televised globally and across social media. It was this insight that best shared her wonderful sense of humour, with treasured memories of Olympic ceremony skydives, and, more recently, of afternoon tea and teacup drumming with Paddington Bear. She truly was a leader for all ages—respected and admired by young and old. Other Members have spoken at length of her dedication and duty. It was this work ethic that I admired the most,

with her service continuing quite literally until the end, as she welcomed her 15th and final Prime Minister just days before her death. What a remarkable drive she had. I suspect that there must have been many times through seven decades of service when a stiff upper lip was required, but, even in the darkest hours, she steadfastly believed that you just had to keep going—a quality of true leadership.

Her Majesty had an unrivalled ability to unite, even at times of deepest division. Perhaps that is why we trusted her. She was our great nation's guide through good times and bad. As a country we looked to her for reassurance and, most recently, in the coronavirus lockdowns. When she said that we would meet again, we trusted the century of experience on which she was drawing.

Her platinum jubilee showed the love that our country had for her and sparked the togetherness, community and patriotism that she consistently inspired. She was so proud of her country and her Commonwealth and we were so proud of her, so we say thank you for 70 years of service, stewardship and extraordinary stoicism. May she rest in peace.

1.38 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): We meet together in mourning. Once again, our late Queen has united the nation, but this time, unfortunately, she has united us in grief and our common sense of loss. We here in Parliament suspend our differences, our party and our political views, because something so large has happened—that constant in our national life who has always been our Queen is no more.

All those of us here who are all privileged to have supporting roles in public life have learned a great deal from observing just how well the Queen carried out all her public service over the years. Everyone here has met her at invitation at Buckingham Palace, or at a national event in London, or, perhaps, hosted her in their constituency—some of us had the honour on many occasions to be with her and to see her. What always came across to all of us was just how much she respected every person and every institution that she visited. She showed that respect by impeccable manners and great courtesy—always on time, always properly briefed, always appropriately dressed for the occasion.

But, as so many have said from their personal experiences, there was something so much more than that. She was not just the consummate professional at those public events: there was the warm spirit, the personality, and above all the understanding that everyone else at that event was terrified that something was going to go wrong, that they had not understood the protocol, or that there was some magic way of doing it—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps) was explaining—that they had to get right. At those public events, the Queen always relaxed people and showed them that there was no right way, because she was there for the people; she was there for the institution; she was there for the event. That is what we can learn from.

Of course, she was also Our Majesty. She was the embodiment of the sovereignty of people and Parliament; she represented us so well abroad and represented us at home, knowing that as a constitutional monarch, she

represented us when we were united. She spoke for those times when we were gloriously happy and celebrating, or she spoke for those times when there was misery and gloom and she had to deal with our grief and point to the better tomorrow. That was why she held that sovereignty so well and for so long—a constitutional monarch who did not exercise the power, but captured the public mood; who managed to deal with fractious and difficult Parliaments and different political leaders, but who was above the politics, which meant that our constitution was safe in her hands. I wish her son, the new King, every success in following that great lead as he has told us he will do, and I can, with others, say today—“God save the King.”

1.41 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is very humbling to follow so many great speeches. On my own behalf and on behalf of my Edinburgh South West constituents, I too rise to honour the memory of our late Queen. Much has been said of her dedication and her service, but I want to concentrate on her love of Scotland and the love of many Scots for her.

As the Queen died at Balmoral, and is to be taken first to the palace of Holyroodhouse and then to St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland will be the centre of the world's attention over the next few days. That is breaking with tradition, but those were the Queen's wishes, and Scotland is honoured by them. The last monarch to die in Scotland was James V, who died at Falkland in 1542. He was, of course, the father of Mary, Queen of Scots, and it was her son James VI who presided over the union of the Crowns. Mary, Queen of Scots is the ancestor of all the Stuarts and, indeed, all the Hanoverians who followed. Elizabeth Stuart, the daughter of James VI, married one of the German electors, and with the demise of the last Stuart monarch in 1714, Elizabeth's grandson succeeded to the British throne. That is the Hanoverian line, and it can be traced directly back to Scotland's Stuarts. Our late Queen was keenly aware of that—perhaps that is why she chose Stuart names for her first two children, Charles and Anne. And, of course, her mother was a Scot.

In 1953, after her coronation, the first place our late Queen visited was Edinburgh, and throughout her reign, she returned to Scotland for important events and, indeed, chose my country to be centre stage during state visits. In 1962, she chose Scotland for the state visit of the King of Norway; in 2010—very memorably for many people of my faith—she chose Holyrood for the state visit of Pope Benedict XVI; and, of course, she officially opened Scotland's Parliament when it was reconvened in 1999.

Our late Queen embodied the union of the English and Scottish Crowns, which of course is quite different from the Union of the Parliaments and predates it by over 100 years. At a time of change, there are many in my country—particularly younger people—who might prefer a republic to a constitutional monarchy, but that did not in any way prevent the affection our late Queen held for Scotland from being returned in equal measure. Sadly, I never had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen of Scots, but earlier this year I did have the privilege of meeting our new King. We spoke of Scotland, and I was left in no doubt that he shared his mother's abiding love of my country.

As such, before I resume my seat, in honour of his late mother, I want to recite just a few words of Burns' poetry that I believe may be a favourite of the King:

“Farewell to the mountains, high-cover'd with snow,
Farewell to the straths and green vallies below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods,
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.”

May she rest in peace.

1.44 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): For all the pomp and tradition, Her late Majesty's true magic was in her humility. She did not need a gilded throne or royal regalia to touch people; it was in her smile, her poise, her natural charm: understated yet reassuring—the best of Britain.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to make this brief tribute on behalf of the royal town of Sutton Coldfield—a royal town now for 494 years and one that, at this sad time, is united with the rest of the country in shared sorrow. The Queen's visit to the ninth world scout jamboree held in Sutton park in 1957 is still remembered by my older constituents, as she came to join in the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of scouting and had lunch in our magnificent town hall.

I have never visited a primary school where one of the first questions has not been, “Have you met the Queen?” I had the privilege and good fortune to meet the Queen when I was her International Development Secretary. Like millions around the world, I will never forget every second of those meetings. She was intensely interested in the less developed members of the Commonwealth. She was the reason that the Commonwealth not only survived but flourished and grew, reaching out to unexpected parts of the world, with Rwanda enthusiastically joining.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in June this year in Rwanda, I watched the binding power of the monarchy, as the King, as he now is, spoke on behalf of Her late Majesty of the ideals and values that she inspired and to which so many nations now aspire. In Kigali, the capital of one of the Commonwealth's youngest countries, the national flag and the flag of the East African Community are today flying at half-mast and will continue to do so until the Queen's funeral.

I also remember travelling for many hours in Uganda to the hospital in Masaka run by the 80-year-old sister of the Medical Missionaries of Mary who had recently received an OBE from the Queen for her 50 years of service. In the hospital entrance hung a huge picture of the President of Uganda, Mr Museveni, alongside an equally huge one of Her Majesty the Head of the Commonwealth.

Tomorrow in the royal town of Sutton Coldfield, we will hold a service of remembrance in our town church, Holy Trinity, followed by a reading of today's proclamation, and we will mourn the loss of our great Queen, who meant so much to us all.

1.47 pm

Sir Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): Like other Members, my main memories of Her late Majesty the Queen are of visits to my constituency. In 1987, I was chair of Newham Council's planning committee, and I negotiated with Mowlem the terms of its planning permission for London City airport. I attended the opening by Her Majesty in November 1987. It was pointed out that the terminal at the airport was on the site where her grandfather opened the King George V dock in 1921, 66 years before.

The airport was controversial locally. It turned out that most local residents, still smarting from the economic damage of the docks' closure 10 years earlier, welcomed the jobs it was bringing, but some were very unhappy, understandably, about living with the noise of the planes. On the day of the airport opening, there was a small demonstration. The airport management, rightly wanting to avoid unnecessary ill feeling, invited half a dozen demonstrators inside and gave them a chance to meet the Queen and set out their case. When it came to their turn, the residents explained their fears about aircraft noise. The Queen listened carefully to what they had to say and replied, "I know exactly what you mean. You should hear the noise at Windsor castle of the jets coming in to land at Heathrow."

The Prime Minister said yesterday that Her late Majesty had a unique ability to transcend difference and heal division. That is what she did on that occasion. Her off-the-cuff response transformed the situation. Arriving as disgruntled outsiders, the residents had been transformed into insiders who had shared a moment of recognition and warmth with their head of state. The rancour between the objectors and the airport was, I think, permanently eased.

The day after the opening ceremony for London 2012, which was a Saturday, when we might have thought that after the night before the then 86-year-old monarch would have been entitled to a day off, the Queen returned to London City airport to mark its 25th anniversary. Other memorable visits included, in her Golden Jubilee tour, a visit to Green Street, the most successful Asian shopping street in the country—we claim—where she was greeted by enthusiastic women in colourful saris waving Union Jacks, creating wonderful photographs in the *Daily Mail* the next day.

We always remember the Queen opening what we now call Newham University Hospital in December 1983. Her reign was seven decades: those treasured memories will last for many decades more.

1.50 pm

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): Like many others, I suspect, my initial reaction on hearing of the Queen's death was not just sadness and regret, but a peculiar sense of uncertainty. How could the world continue without this magnificent woman playing a central role in the background of all our lives? Also like many others, I was privileged and lucky enough to meet the Queen a number of times and can add to the testimonies of many other Members about her warmth, kindness, vast depth of knowledge, razor-sharp mind and fabulously dry sense of humour. My best evidence of the latter was one of those Privy Council meetings that takes place when a new member is appointed—I am happy to report to my right hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn

Hatfield (Grant Shapps) that it was not his—and involves a lot of kneeling, moving, kneeling again, holding a Bible, kissing and talking. Politicians are good at words, but many of them are not very good at choreography and I vividly remember one occasion when somebody got it badly wrong. There was chaos. My right hon. Friend was nothing on that. As hon. Members can imagine, it provoked silent but extreme hilarity and glee among all the close friends of the poor wretch who had got it so badly wrong. I looked across and the Queen's face was completely impassive, but the look in her eyes told me that the person biting their tongue hardest in that room was Her Majesty.

One of the Queen's greatest personal attributes was that, despite being royalty all her life and the monarch for 70 years, she did not have a trace of self-regarding pomposity. But her many personal attributes were not enough to make her a great leader—she had so much more than that to give. Particularly, she had a genius for necessary reform, for taking an ancient institution of huge importance and changing it little by little so that it stayed relevant in fast-moving times. She enabled the monarchy to remain ancient and modern. It is an extraordinary achievement.

Even in the last 48 hours, we have seen that the new King is proceeding along the same path, with the televising of the Accession Council and the unexpected walkabout at Buckingham Palace yesterday. Those tell us that King Charles will preserve the traditions of the monarchy while keeping it fit for the 21st century and beyond, so we can be assured that we will continue to have a people's monarchy. There can be no greater tribute to the late Queen, and no better platform for the new King, than that we can say with great confidence, "God save the King".

1.53 pm

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): So many of us are trying to find the words to describe the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Many have eloquently, philosophically, emotionally and even poetically alluded to her legacy and reign. Despite all the great words that have been and will be said, we all fall short, not because of the lack of words or of heartfelt emotion on this momentous occasion, but because even our greatest words fall short when it comes to doing justice to the life, legacy and reign of an extraordinary monarch.

We look around the world and we realise that these are sombre moments not just for the people of Britain or the Commonwealth, but for the entire world. Indeed, the elegant words of President Macron of France,

"To you, she was your Queen. To us, she was the Queen."

highlight how she was a worldly figure who existed beyond the nations and realm, in the hearts of people across the world. She was a unifying monarch, who brought people together in a way that was unique to her. That is why, when we look across our nation at the sadness and grief that people and communities are feeling, we see that people of all races, of all religions and of all communities are united in the devotion and heartfelt emotion they are showing at the passing of their Queen.

This unified attachment to Her Majesty did not just appear out of nowhere, but was directly a symbol she expressed throughout her reign. In 1952, in her first

Christmas broadcast, at a time when inclusion and diversity were very much unseen in society, she addressed the nations and asked that people, whatever their religion, pray for her and her reign. We heard the same message of inclusivity and diversity from our new monarch, King Charles III.

In the same way, despite Her Majesty keeping her views close to her heart, her deep-felt connection to the Commonwealth and to justice was obvious. By summer 1986, the Queen's apparent objection to the refusal by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to place sanctions on apartheid South Africa was widely known. It is no wonder that her favourite African leader was Nelson Mandela, with whom she held a deep friendship until he sadly passed.

On a more local front, the Queen made several visits and was welcomed by the people of Bradford throughout her 70-year reign. Eighteen months after her coronation, on her nationwide tour, she visited Bradford, marking the city's first royal visit since 1942. She visited Bradford Park Avenue during this trip and was sung to by 30,000 schoolchildren. On behalf of all my constituents, I hope I can express their thoughts, feelings and condolences to the royal family at this difficult time.

As one era comes to an end, we pray for the next. As a woman of faith, I admired Her Majesty as she was a person of deep faith and belief. I end with the words of a great Muslim poet, Rumi:

"You are not a drop in the ocean; you are an entire ocean in a drop".

Her Majesty was an ocean in her kindness, selflessness and humour, and she made herself a drop through her humbleness, sense of duty and service to her people. God save our King.

1.57 pm

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): My constituents in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells and the wider borough of Tunbridge Wells loved Her late Majesty. On behalf of us all, I express our gratitude for her life of service. In Royal Tunbridge Wells, we have a very special connection through Mr Harry Collins, who for 22 years has been the personal jeweller to Her late Majesty, responsible for the care of her jewels and for designing and making some of the new pieces that have been so admired around the world during that time. I had coffee with Mr Collins this morning. His devotion to Her late Majesty is absolute and he is much too discreet to break any confidences, but I did read that his appointment survived his having fallen flat on top of one of the Queen's corgis when attempting to follow protocol by walking backwards during one of his early consultations.

Like many right hon. and hon. Members, one of the high points of my life was meeting Her late Majesty to be sworn in to the Privy Council for the first time, as I was in 2010. We heard yesterday and earlier today about some of the hazards of that occasion. So overwhelming is that moment that, I understand, men have suddenly been moved to curtsy in front of Her Majesty, and otherwise capable people have swayed on the footstool while trying to kneel on one knee, hold a Bible up in one hand and recite the Oath at the same time. Of course, the one person who did not mind was Her late Majesty herself, who put everyone at their ease.

One of the reasons that I will always be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) is that, in reappointing me to the Cabinet this summer, I was able to swear the Oath of Office to Her late Majesty in person on 8 July at Windsor Castle. When I shook Her late Majesty's hand, I was greeted with the most dazzling 1,000-watt smile and sparkling eyes that suggested that she was absolutely thrilled to see me. I strongly suspect that Her late Majesty's demeanour did not reflect the fulfilment of a three-year hope that the Prime Minister would restore me to office. Instead, it showed that at the age of 96, on a hot summer's afternoon, Her Majesty still recognised that, for everyone she met, it was a moment that they would treasure forever. In a second, it revealed her personal kindness and adherence to the highest of standards, right to the last.

Across the world, over 70 years, hundreds of thousands of people have been treated with such kindness and thoughtfulness by Her Majesty the Queen. Her life was one of constant, devoted and selfless service. We are blessed that she reigned over us. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

2 pm

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): Like many, I had the great privilege of meeting the Queen as a member of the Privy Council, a Defence Minister and a Member of this House. I remember the first time I met her, not long after being first elected to the House in 2001. A number of us were invited to meet Her Majesty, and you can imagine that we were all very nervous and apprehensive about the visit. But as many colleagues have said in these tributes, once we met her, she made us feel at ease. She asked questions about our backgrounds and was interested in our constituencies. The other thing that struck me was her encyclopaedic knowledge of different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mention has already been made in these tributes of the Queen's dedication to our armed forces. That was not simply because she was head of the armed forces, but because she had real devotion to them and an understanding of their role, as somebody who had served in them herself. I have to say that it went beyond that, however, and the best example I can give is the decision that was taken in 2009, when I was Veterans Minister, to award the Elizabeth Cross to the next of kin of those who had lost loved ones in the service of our country. I can attest to the fact that that decision was not popular among certain parts of the establishment, but it showed that the Queen recognised the important role that families have played, and continue to play, in supporting those we ask to serve as members of our armed forces.

For many of us, including many of my North Durham constituents, the Queen has been a constant presence in our lives in an increasingly changing world. She was dedicated to two important things: duty and service, which were the central tenets of her reign. In this cynical age, some may dismiss those values as old-fashioned and part of a bygone age, but I disagree. The cynics who aim to divide us need reminding of how the Queen led by example in saying that we are individuals with differences, but working together despite those differences makes us all stronger.

[Mr Kevan Jones]

Yesterday we sat in this Chamber and listened to our new King's address to the nation. Despite his grief and the huge responsibility that now rests on his shoulders, it is clear that the dedication to duty and service that the late Queen exemplified with such excellence will continue. God save the King.

2.3 pm

Sir Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): It is an honour to have this opportunity to offer my condolences and those of my family and constituents to His Majesty the King and the royal family, and to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Like many others, I was privileged to meet her a number of times, and it was easy to be intimidated by what she was, but never by who she was—with the authority, there was always great warmth.

We have heard many eloquent tributes in the last 48 hours, but perhaps none has been quite so eloquent as the faces of the people we have all seen on the streets. Those faces show her subjects' struggle to reconcile the feelings of grief, gratitude and pride that we all share for the life and work of our late Queen. We grieve because of the scale of our national loss but also, more personally, because we relied on her constancy to anchor our own lives, to an extent that many of us are only now beginning to realise. We grieve, too, because we no longer have this remarkable individual fulfilling this uniquely challenging role.

The task of modern monarchy looks impossible—to encapsulate all that is good about a nation and a family of nations; to celebrate its diversity while drawing it together; to be looked to to set the tone at every moment of collective joy and disaster; and to share the best and worst moments of one's own life with the country and the world. In meeting that challenge, Queen Elizabeth II was a breathtaking example of servant leadership for 70 years, making the impossible look effortless and maintaining an irrepressible sense of humour throughout.

It is for that leadership that we feel such gratitude amid our sadness. It was delivered by this most exemplary of British monarchs in the most British of styles, with resilience and dignity and without drama or fuss, with service to others as a primary and persistent vocation, however hard the task or the events of her own life—perhaps not always happy, but always glorious. This was majesty indeed.

We are proud that we were privileged to live in this second Elizabethan age, and that for so much of our recent history our nation was personified by the monarch we mourn today. Her loss is great, but her legacy is greater: a country, a people and a Commonwealth immeasurably better for her long and faithful service to us all.

2.6 pm

Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD): It is an honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth in this place on behalf of my constituents in North East Fife.

As a relatively new MP, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the history of this place and the events that it has seen, and never more so than today when considering

the Queen's life, her dedication and her work. I feel, as I know many do, unanchored. We were all Elizabethans, the majority of us without realisation or acknowledgement. No matter our views on the monarchy, the Queen was there—our constant through ever-changing times. We have seen both a jolting and an imperceptible change in the filter of our lives, with QC changing to KC, and the prospect of future King's Speeches in this place and the singing of "God Save the King." Given the current line of succession, it is unlikely that any of us here will see a reigning queen again in our lifetime.

Like other hon. Members, I want to pay tribute to the Queen's service, her dedication to the nations of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth and their citizens, and her commitment to her people. In Scotland, she was our Queen of Scots—the Scots as a people—and we know her love of Scotland, as a place of beauty, of escape and of peace. I trust that she found some of that beauty and peace on her visits to North East Fife.

Fife is known as the Kingdom of Fife in recognition of its royal and religious heritage, including that of St Andrews, named for our nation's patron saint, and Falkland, whose palace is closely associated with another Queen of Scots, Mary. The Queen's first and last visits to the area were to Leuchars military base, where in 2018, as their Colonel-in-Chief, she presented the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards with a new standard.

Visits in between took in the broad spectrum of meeting the communities of East Neuk, the former royal borough of Cupar and beyond, and visiting the ancient University of St Andrews, a place of recent family significance. I wish the Queen's granddaughter, Lady Louise, well as she commences her studies there and hope that she finds comfort in our town. The breadth of the Queen's engagements in North East Fife reflect her life, from leading her armed services to hearing from the smallest of children.

For me, as a primary child of the '80s, the Queen meant Brownie promises and royal weddings, with the Queen off centre as a happy and proud parent. I never had the privilege of meeting her. My only connection is that I was one of the last babies christened by the Reverend Keith Angus before he went to Crathie Kirk, to become the Queen's chaplain in Scotland. It has been wonderful to hear from right hon. and hon. Members who did meet her. The twinkle in her eye has come through strongly, although I have always wondered if, like Paddington, she could subject Ministers to a very hard stare.

I saw her once in person at the last Queen's Speech she attended in this place, which took place during covid. She processed past me down the Royal Gallery, supported by her son, now our King. He and the rest of the royal family are in my thoughts and prayers, and those of my constituents. God save the King.

2.9 pm

Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): Broxbourne mourns the death of Her Majesty the Queen, but it celebrates her life of selfless service. Quite simply, I join my constituents now in saying: God save the King.

2.10 pm

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents in Eltham, I send my deepest sympathies to His Royal Highness King Charles III and his family on the passing of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Over the last few days we have identified a new syndrome, which I think will be studied for years: Queen Elizabeth II syndrome. I thought that I would be sorry for the nation at losing its Head of State; I thought that I would be very sympathetic and sorry for the family at losing a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother; but I must admit that I did not expect to feel such a deep personal sense of loss. I know others have expressed the same feeling.

If we conjure to mind the images that mould us—those that make us British, if you like—it is the Queen's image that stands out most prominently. If we think of the characteristics that we associate with Britishness—strength, fairness, dignity, dedication, determination, duty, tradition, charity—those are all attributes that we would associate with the Queen in the way that she performed her task as our monarch. They are characteristics that she applied both at home and abroad. She was the embodiment of how we would want to be seen in the world.

The Queen's longevity in her role gave her a deep knowledge and understanding of global politics and its personalities, which no other country benefited from. She saw politicians come and go: she reigned over 15 Prime Ministers, more than a quarter of the Prime Ministers we have ever had, and she saw 13 Presidents and six Popes. She was determined to lead by example each and every time she stepped out in public. Her generation—the war generation—is a tough generation. Her experience of that gave her the insight to know exactly what message we needed during the covid pandemic. She knew that, through our collective endeavour, we would get through, and she set that beacon at the end of the road, which will be etched forever in the rock of our nation: “We will meet again”.

The Queen's generation knew loss in the darkest of hours, and her dedication to duty told her that at her darkest of times she must lead by example. She sat alone wearing a mask—obeying the rules—at her husband's funeral. I do not think I admired her more at any other time. She did not waver in her duty. It is not fair to those who will follow to say that we will not see her like again. Our King has a hard act to follow, so I say: God help the King.

2.13 pm

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): It is with great humility and sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of my constituents in West Worcestershire. When we think of the sadness that we are feeling, we can only imagine how much grief her family members must be feeling, and we send them our heartfelt condolences. I think so many of us had hoped that Her late Majesty would reach her 100th birthday, like her mother, and that she would have to decide whether to send herself a telegram.

During her reign, Her late Majesty made four official visits to Worcestershire, most recently during her diamond jubilee tour, when she opened her faithful city of Worcester's new library, The Hive. It was an honour to meet her on that occasion. On her first visit to Worcestershire as Queen, in 1957, she came to Malvern to see the Royal Radar Establishment and Malvern College. Radar was invented in Malvern and it played such an important role in our winning the second world war.

As many colleagues have said, Her late Majesty took a particular interest in our work here in Parliament. She invited all new MPs to meet her after the election in 2010. It was on that occasion that I learned of her fondness for Malvern water. It was on that occasion that I learned of her fondness for Malvern water. Since then, many of us have always thought that it was perhaps Malvern water that had given Her Majesty her wonderful complexion and helped her enjoy such a long life.

Many tributes have made it clear how close the Queen's relationship has been with this Parliament, but as Chair of the British group in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I wish to highlight her role in supporting international parliamentary democracy, human rights and the rule of law around the world. The Inter-Parliamentary Union brings together almost the whole of the world's parliamentarians, and as our Head of State, the Queen opened three of the organisation's conferences in London—those in 1957 and 1975 and, notably, the centenary conference of the IPU in 1989. As she addressed those hundreds of parliamentarians from around the world, she underlined the core values of multilateralism and the importance of bringing parliamentarians together to find peaceful methods of solving disputes and to understand each other. In this time of grieving, let us reinforce that wisdom that lasting peace must come through words.

Our late Queen is now at peace and, in the words of our daily prayer in this Chamber, may she attain everlasting joy and felicity. God save the King.

2.16 pm

Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a privilege to have the opportunity to rise in this debate to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on my own behalf but also, particularly importantly, on behalf of my constituents. The Queen was a remarkable monarch, loved and admired, as many in this House have underlined, across our great country and across the world. As a result, I have not been surprised by the depth, warmth and sheer volume of heartfelt messages that my constituents have shared about her life and their sense of loss at her passing.

Harrow was the first borough created by the Queen after her coronation in 1953—that is probably the most important of the many reasons why we have been the most important part of London ever since. She visited our borough many times, and she made many school visits, in particular. She also came to celebrate the borough's golden jubilee in 2004, and she was always enormously well received.

Like others, I had the privilege of meeting the Queen on a couple of occasions. As a new Member of Parliament, I met her at a reception in Buckingham Palace for young achievers, which is probably the nearest I have ever come to being a rising star. I also met her as a Minister in the Foreign Office. What was obvious on that occasion, and in the many conversations I had with Ministers across the Commonwealth and the globe, was the enormous respect in which she was held. Her quiet work, receiving and meeting diplomats and the leaders of the countries with which our country needed to engage, was always enormously well received and hugely important. Many of my constituents—those who have

[Gareth Thomas]

links to India and Pakistan, or links across east Africa, to Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, in particular, or across west Africa, such as those with a background in Ghana, or those who have a background in the Caribbean—talk of their immense respect for her, but also of the immense respect of their families and relations back home.

The Queen's was a remarkable life—70 years of phenomenal public service as our monarch. Her skills, her constancy and her considerable diplomatic efforts helped underline and enhance the greatness of our country. The warmth of the tributes from leaders across the globe, the Commonwealth and Europe, and indeed from the President of the United States, have only underlined her importance to our country. God save the Queen, and God save the King.

2.19 pm

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): It is an honour to give a tribute on behalf of the people of the Cotswolds, with their many connections with the royal family. Ever since Her Majesty the Queen made that public broadcast when she was just 21, pledging a whole life of service to the nation, she has honoured that to the full. She ruled unstintingly for over seven decades, bolstered by her sense of duty, Christian faith and, as others have said, her sense of humour. She was the rock, the constant for the nation—always wise and comforting counsel. The first British monarch to visit the Republic of Ireland for 100 years, and a visitor to west Germany in 1965, she was indeed a world-class diplomat. She was, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) said, an important leader of the Commonwealth, which during her reign increased from seven members to 56 countries—a legacy that we should strive to build on. A true countrywoman, she liked nothing better than to ride on her horse in her earlier days or walk her dogs. She took a keen interest in nature and understood agriculture. She loved horse-racing.

The Queen visited Cirencester in 1963 to view the revamp of the marketplace. She then visited the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford to celebrate the RAF's 90th anniversary in 2008. She was one of the most influential and important figures in the 20th and 21st centuries—a truly great Queen, who united all in every part of this nation, the Commonwealth and beyond. Our sympathies go out to all members of the royal family. She is now at peace with her beloved husband, Prince Philip. God save the King.

2.21 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I want to say on behalf of my constituents in Worsley and Eccles South that we are deeply saddened by the death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She has been the monarch throughout my lifetime, and this loss feels like losing a member of my own family. She was devoted to the service of the nation for 70 years, and she served our country and the Commonwealth with great commitment, deep devotion and dignity.

My constituency of Worsley and Eccles South lies within the city of Salford. One of our most famous artists, L. S. Lowry, was one of the official artists at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. His classic

work from that momentous day is called “The Procession passing the Queen Victoria Memorial”. In October 2000, the late Queen officially opened the Lowry theatre and art gallery in Salford. During her visit, the Queen greeted staff and volunteers from the Lowry and spoke to local schoolchildren who had created an exhibition of photographs about life in Salford. His Royal Highness Prince Philip was the first chancellor of the University of Salford, and the Queen supported him in his role as a dedicated and active chancellor during his 24-year tenure at the university.

In 2012, during her diamond jubilee tour, the late Queen opened MediaCity, the home of the BBC and ITV Granada in the north, as well as other media service companies, and the media base of the University of Salford. It was an honour for me to meet the Queen on that occasion. The late Queen's last visit to Salford was in July last year. She met actors and members of the production staff at the “Coronation Street” set in MediaCity, in celebration of the show's 60th anniversary.

As the shadow Minister for civil society, I know that many charities hold the late Queen Elizabeth II in very high esteem. She was the patron of more than 600 charities, military associations, professional bodies and public service organisations, and tributes have been pouring in from many of them over the last couple of days. The late Queen's patronages cover every area of the charity and voluntary sector, from charities for young people to the preservation of wildlife and the environment. The values that she possessed of selfless public service, compassion and leadership encompass the spirit of our civil society.

In her Christmas message of 2016, Her late Majesty talked of drawing strength from

“ordinary people doing extraordinary things: volunteers, carers, community organisers”,

and she said:

“On our own, we cannot end wars or wipe out injustice, but the cumulative impact of thousands of small acts of goodness can be bigger than we imagine.”

Her own thousands of acts of goodness will be remembered for generations. I know that her legacy will continue to live on in the thousands of charities and volunteers dedicated to supporting communities across the UK and around the world, and that King Charles III will continue the traditions of selfless public service, compassion and leadership. God save the King.

2.24 pm

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Towards the end of yesterday's proceedings, participants were encouraged to avoid repeating the points of their predecessors. That is no easy task when such unanimity prevails. Some Members of this House clearly had far more contact with Her Majesty than others. Yet, it is natural that so many of us wish to record our tributes to the outstanding monarch of the modern age—not simply for ourselves but on behalf of tens of thousands of constituents who also adored her.

One reason for that adoration was the Queen's accessibility. The *Lymington Times* has helpfully listed four notable visits she paid to our part of Hampshire, including in 1979 to mark the 900th anniversary of the New Forest and in 2012 as part of her diamond jubilee tour. Multiply those visits by well over 600 constituencies

and the scale of her efforts, on visits alone, is colossal. New Forest East was formed before the 1997 general election and, as its first MP, I described to the House how even so beautiful an area had been touched and toughened by the impact of war. Princess Elizabeth's formative years were similarly shaped and strengthened by that ordeal. Her family's involvement with the services, already so strong, could only increase. While others directed the operations of the military, the allegiance of those forces was to her and her alone. This is more than symbolic: it is an essential guarantee of the constitutional independence of the military.

I am very fortunate to represent so many people with past, present or potential service in the armed forces of the Crown. One such constituent—my partner's father—received his Distinguished Flying Cross from the hands of the Queen as long ago as 1955 during the Malayan emergency. He was struck by the depth of her knowledge even then: it went far beyond the formalities of an investiture. We can truly be thankful that, at the top of society, she chose to be its servant. She adapted to change, yet always seemed the same. She did her duty unfailingly and was, in short, an inspiration to the nation.

2.27 pm

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): It is a privilege to follow so many others in rising to pay tribute to her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of the people of Ilford North and the London Borough of Redbridge. The depth of our sorrow reflects—in part—the length of her reign, her lifetime of service and duty, and the devotion she gave to her family, our country and our Commonwealth, but it also reflects how special the woman beneath the Crown was: at once the head of our royal family and yet able to touch the hearts of every family in the land.

East London holds a special place in its heart for the royal family. During the second world war, King George VI and his family stayed in London during the blitz and visited families whose lives and livelihoods had been devastated by the Nazi onslaught. The then Princess Elizabeth visited Ilford to see those affected by the bombing the day after VE Day in 1945 and returned again in 1949 to see the one thousandth council home that had been built by Atlee's Government. She is said to have remarked,

“of all the houses and estates I have visited, Ilford's are the best”. She also visited a care home where one elderly resident was so thrilled to meet the Princess that they immediately burst into tears of happiness.

I saw a similar outpouring of emotion when the Queen visited Ilford again for her diamond jubilee in 2012, where she unveiled a plaque to the dry garden created in her honour in Valentines Park. It spoke to the great challenge of climate change—a cause close to the heart of our dear King. One resident told the *Ilford Recorder*,

“we have always read about queens and princesses in the story books. To have the Queen in our neighbourhood, it's like a dream come true.”

A dream come true—that is a sentiment I cannot imagine being elicited for a mere President, and one that was certainly elicited with no effort for Her Majesty the Queen. It hardly seems real that that dream has ended.

We are privileged to have lived in the second Elizabethan age. Her late Majesty the Queen oversaw our country's transition from empire to Commonwealth, to a modern democracy, witnessing huge social changes throughout her lifetime. So many of my constituents are proud of those changes, and of course retain strong familial bonds across the Commonwealth. Her Majesty showed by example that tradition and modernity are not adversaries but well-suited companions, from her first televised address to her very last Zoom call. From the beginning of her reign, amid rationing and post-war reconstruction, to her address to the nation at the height of the covid pandemic, she reminded us that whatever the triumphs and disasters of our history, our country's best days now lie ahead. History, like life, moves on.

His Majesty the King has told us that the grief of the nation, and indeed the grief of the world, has provided comfort to his family for their irreparable loss. I hope he knows that his presence in our lives in recent days has been comforting and reassuring too—and if I may say so, Mr Speaker, when the Queen welcomed the then Duchess of Cornwall into her family, the nation took her into our hearts. It is a privilege and a pleasure to see her take her place as Queen Consort.

We are blessed to have known the reign of Elizabeth II, our greatest Queen. May God rest her soul, and may God save the King.

Mr Speaker: Before I leave the Chair, let me remind Members and staff that a service will take place tomorrow at 6 pm in St Margaret's Church for the parliamentary community to remember Her late Majesty the Queen. Will those wishing to attend please contact my office?

2.31 pm

Will Quince (Colchester) (Con): It is with great sadness that, on behalf of the people of Colchester, I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Her Majesty dedicated her reign to serving our country and the Commonwealth. In her lifetime she witnessed the nation, and the world, being transformed immeasurably, yet for so many of us she was the constant throughout our lifetimes, her warmth and her smile providing stability and reassurance during the very toughest of times. Her service to the British people and her presence in our lives will be forever held in our hearts, and in the hearts of people across the world.

Of behalf of the people of Colchester, to His Majesty King Charles III and the royal family I send our sincere condolences, and to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II we send our thanks, our admiration and our love. May you rest in peace, Ma'am. God save the King.

2.32 pm

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and on behalf of my constituents, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the royal family.

When I heard the sad news, my first thought was that we, the British people, had lost our pre-eminent public servant. Her late Majesty once said:

“I do not give you laws or administer justice, but I can do something else. I can give you my heart and devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations.”

Queen Elizabeth dedicated her life to the greater good, and wove together the ties that bind us.

[Nick Smith]

In 2012 the Queen visited Ebbw Vale. It was one of those days in our valleys when the skies empty gallons, but still she saw through the programme. Her late Majesty knew that meeting our community leaders, hearing our choirs, collecting flowers from children—being with us—mattered. She showered good will on the people of Blaenau Gwent as the water rained down on all of us.

In the days that followed, the Queen also visited Aberfan. She was due to open a new school in the village that had been struck by grief just 46 years earlier. On reflection, I now realise that she was the constant. She was there when tragedy struck, standing alongside us when our nation mourned, but she was also there to usher in the new beginnings.

As I look to the future and think of His Majesty King Charles III, I recall his visit, as Prince of Wales, to Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, the hospital named after my predecessor who established our national health service. Although it was very carefully done, there was a nod to the political genius who established yet another great institution of our country. The Prince wore a blue cornflower in his buttonhole—it was a classy look. He clearly knew of our great valleys and their history. I have no doubt that he will continue the legacy of his beloved mother, the late Queen.

Finally, I warmly welcome the naming of the new Prince and Princess of Wales. Though I mourn our longest-reigning monarch, I now say, God save the King.

2.35 pm

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I was appointed deputy chairman of the Conservative party in 2015. I would be attending Cabinet, but no one had informed me that I would be made a Privy Counsellor. My constituency office got a call saying that I needed to attend Buckingham Palace, so I replied to my caseworker, “It’s a nutter on the phone—just ignore it.” This happened with two or three telephone calls, and it was only on the day itself, when I was told that a ministerial car would be picking me up to take me to the palace, that I realised—I would have bought a nicer suit, had I known. It was the greatest honour of my life. Sadly, I was unable to kneel because of my legs, but Her Majesty the Queen did not bat an eyelid. There I was, the son of an immigrant to this country, becoming a member of the Privy Council, and I thought to myself, “What an honour, and what a meritocratic country we have become.”

I am very proud to be here representing my constituents of Harlow, Hastingwood, Matching, Nazeing, Roydon and Sheering. The Queen visited Harlow in 1957. Harlow is a new town built after the war to provide homes, and many of the people who moved there had come from the east end of London. She had a wonderful visit to the market square, which the BBC featured in one of its documentaries over the past couple of days. The visit symbolised that, although she came from the old world, the Queen was bringing in the new world. She was showing that this was what the new, post-war Britain would be about: beautiful new towns, bringing hope, aspiration, achievement, opportunity, community and dignity to our country. These were, of course, the values that Her Majesty represented.

Finally, I am a Jewish MP and I was brought up in the United Synagogue, which is traditional Judaism. Every single part of the service is in Hebrew and, not being the best of learners, I did not understand a lot of what was going on, but the one part of the service in English is the prayer for the Queen:

“May the Supreme King of Kings in His mercy preserve the Queen in life, guard her and deliver her from all trouble and sorrow.”

The one English part of the service said in synagogues across the land every week is a prayer for the Queen, and it made me very proud whenever I attended synagogue that I was able to say that prayer. The Queen embodied everybody, not just her deep Christianity but everyone of all faiths: Jews, Muslims, Hindus and people of many other faiths.

This week the synagogues will be saying not a prayer for the Queen, sadly, but a prayer for King Charles. The rest of the prayer says:

“May He put a spirit of wisdom and understanding into his heart and into the hearts of all his counsellors, that they may uphold the peace of the realm, advance the welfare of the nation and deal kindly and justly with all the house of Israel.”

On behalf of those of the Jewish faith in our country, and also my constituents of Harlow, Hastingwood, Matching, Nazeing, Roydon and Sheering, God save the King.

2.39 pm

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I rise on behalf of my constituents in Central Ayrshire to express our sympathies to the royal family and to pay respect to Her late Majesty for her long service of threescore years and ten—literally a biblical lifetime. Being from Northern Ireland, for me her greatest contribution was to peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland, through both bravely welcoming Martin McGuinness here in London and her state visit in 2011, which brought so much healing.

The debate has already woven the most important part of any funeral: the eulogy. It reminds me of the traditional wakes with which I grew up, with the coffin lying in state in the living room surrounded by family, friends and neighbours. What struck me then as a little girl was how the sadness gave way once the funny, embarrassing stories started, with talk of someone being on a chair in Blackpool singing at the top of their voice. Those stories changed the whole mood in the room that I observed as a five, six and seven-year-old. The sombre tones were replaced by laughter. Strangely, the coffin often turned into a coffee table, covered in glasses. I do not think that Her late Majesty is likely to face that indignity, but I remember my uncle saying that he aspired to being buried in a coffin with ring marks because that would be a symbol of a really good wake: one that accepts that death is part of life and one that celebrates not a life ended but a life completed.

In the same way, the Chamber has been lifted by so many funny stories that demonstrate Her late Majesty’s great sense of fun, both in public, such as the stunts at the Olympics or with Paddington Bear, or in private, as we have heard from right hon. and hon. Members today. The most illuminating are those that show how she used humour to put people at ease, out of her kindness. I think that she is probably delighted at the sheer amount of laughter there has been in the Chamber over the last two days.

Having walked the last journey with many of my patients over a lot of years, I know that virtually all of us would choose to die peacefully at home, and that is exactly what the Queen did. So we should take comfort from the fact that she ended her life peacefully and quietly at home in her favourite place, Balmoral, surrounded by her family and loved ones. It does not get better than that. So while we offer our sympathy and condolences to her family in their sorrow at her loss, we should be glad for her. She goes to her rest, welcomed once again into the arms of her beloved Philip and, no doubt, already sharing a wry joke, probably at our expense. For Her late Majesty, I simply pray, may she rest in peace.

2.43 pm

Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con): I rise on behalf of my constituents in Rochester and Strood to extend my deepest condolences to the royal family. Her late Majesty's death is a terrible loss for us all and has touched every corner of the world. She was a constant reassuring presence. The world is unrecognisable from the start of her reign but, despite those changes, she was a steadying figure who led this country from the aftermath of the second world war to being the country that we are today.

Like many in the House, I had only lived under the Queen's reign. As a female born in 1978, I was lucky to be born into a unique era for this country and grow up under both a female Head of State and a female Prime Minister for the first time in history. We had those powerful female figures at the top of our country, so for me it was absolutely normal to see women leading.

The Queen was a remarkable figure and an inspiration to many, whose influence has shaped generations as the values that she embodied of a sense of duty, public service and quiet dignity epitomised her reign. She was a continuous figure, both in this country and around the world, who managed to exercise a calm and steadying influence over our country, even its toughest times.

Rochester and Strood was blessed by many visits from Her Majesty over the years. I am immensely proud of our royal history and the links we have with our late Queen. She made her first visit to Rochester with King George VI in 1938, when they visited the Short Brothers aircraft works. That was followed by a visit to the Historic Dockyard Chatham in 1942. I hope that I am right in saying that she liked what she saw in those early visits before her accession, inspiring many trips in the following years.

In her role as its Colonel-in-Chief, she inspected the Corps of Royal Engineers at Brompton barracks in 1968, during one of her many visits there. She also opened the Royal Engineers Museum in 1987. She made her final visit in 2016 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the corps, and it was the greatest honour of my life to meet her on that occasion.

I felt nervous, like everyone else meeting the Queen for the first time, and after overcoming the first hurdle of getting my curtsy right, I moved on to the next step of meeting her: the handshake. There I was, just over a year into being an MP, standing in front of Her Majesty, who had just turned 90, worrying about the damage that I could cause her hand should I grip too hard. I could not have been more wrong: I had failed to appreciate how years of experience had left Her Majesty skilled in

administering a handshake. With her great smile and the twinkle in her eye that so many have spoken about, she took my hand firmly, and released it before I could even take a moment.

The barracks were not the only place that the Queen had visited in Rochester. She went to Rochester cathedral, and she even took a trip to our great Isle of Grain oil refinery in 1955. Following her 1942 visit to the Historic Dockyard Chatham in 1942, she returned to the site in 1984, when she was able to see the redevelopment proposal for the closed Chatham dockyards on St Mary's island.

Those are a few examples highlighting how committed and dedicated the Queen was to her people. She was totally devoted to the British people throughout her reign, and the hundreds of thousands of people who met her felt at ease. Her absence will be felt around the world. My thoughts and prayers are with her family. I know that King Charles III has the support of Rochester and all the good people to lead this country into a new era. God save the King.

2.47 pm

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): This is not just a time of national mourning; our grief is shared the world over, a testament to our Queen's service and the impact she had. For seven decades, she selflessly dedicated her life to service. She was icon who meant so much to us all and who, at times, we felt we would never lose. So long was her service that her presence was sewn into the very fabric of our society, guiding our country above the fray of politics. Her unrivalled commitment and experience helped to lead our nation and keep it steady, no matter the political turbulence. In her quiet way, she symbolised the commitment, selflessness and humility that we expect from our leaders.

The progress that we saw globally in technology, culture and politics during her reign is unparalleled in history, but as an ever-present matriarch throughout, she assured us as the world changed exponentially. It is truly sad that we have now lost her. Although my words today cannot do justice to a life of such dedication, the outpouring of tributes the world over is a testament to her place in our lives. Now, our thoughts are with her family as they mourn; we all send them our condolences.

In my constituency of Lewisham West and Penge, we mourn her, too. In June, we came together across the constituency to hold platinum jubilee parties. Neighbours came together for the first time since the pandemic, children played in the street, and people made new friends—all in her name.

I was proud to help to organise my jubilee street party. My seven-year-old son declared it the "best day ever", and we raised more than £800 for our local food bank. One of my earliest childhood memories was seeing the Queen as she visited the pioneering St Christopher's Hospice in my constituency. Her support, and that of the royal family, made such a huge difference to its work. I know that I speak on behalf of everyone in my constituency when I say thank you, Your Majesty, for everything—the service, selflessness and humility. Queen Elizabeth II went above the call of duty, and for that, we will always be grateful.

2.50 pm

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): It is a privilege to join hon. Members in paying tribute to Her late Majesty, not just on my own behalf, but on behalf of all the people of the Maldon constituency. Many fine tributes have been given yesterday and today, and many hon. Members have spoken of Her late Majesty's dedication, commitment, remarkable sense of duty, and lifetime of service, which was always performed with dignity, compassion and kindness. I echo all those sentiments.

It has been an extraordinary week, starting with the appointment of a new Prime Minister and ending with the accession of a new sovereign. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I am sure she will be grateful that her first audience with the monarch was with Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. I am sure that His Majesty King Charles will continue to provide advice and counsel, but my right hon. Friend must be sad that she will not benefit from the extraordinary wisdom and experience that Her late Majesty shared in advising 15 successive Prime Ministers.

Before entering the House, I worked for one of those Prime Ministers, Margaret Thatcher. She used to fix in her diary—the only immutable engagement in 11 years—the weekly audience with Her Majesty. I suspect that there were, occasionally, some quite robust discussions—she never spoke of what was said—but I know that she immensely valued the experience of Her late Majesty and was hugely honoured when Her late Majesty attended her 70th birthday party.

A number of hon. Members have spoken about how they are asked in primary schools whether they have met the Queen, and I have had exactly the same experience, but I have also been struck on international visits when many parliamentarians from across the world have spoken of their admiration of the Queen and have envied the fact that we have benefited from having her as our sovereign. We have seen that in the global tributes, with Union Jacks and the red, white and blue across America and Brazil; the extraordinary display on Sydney opera house yesterday; and the words of the President of France—a country that has not always had great relations with the British monarch—who said:

“To you, she was your Queen. To us, she was the Queen.”

Like many right hon. Members, I benefited from meeting the Queen as a member of the Privy Council, and I had the good fortune to accompany her to the Cenotaph on one occasion, which is one of the roles of what was then the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. It was her two visits to Maldon, however, that my constituents will always value. The first visit was in 1971 to mark the 800th anniversary of the award of the charter to Maldon by Henry II. I was privileged to take part in the second visit in 2010, when the Queen visited Maldon Salt before walking down the high street to have lunch in the town hall. On that day, it seemed that the whole town turned out to celebrate her visit. Today, the whole town, indeed the whole of my constituency, is once again united in mourning the passage of Her late Majesty and in pledging allegiance to King Charles III.

2.53 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): There is nothing more important to a child than their mother. She provides comfort, security and stability amid the

worries of the world. She is the person assumed by all of us to go on forever. And so it was with Queen Elizabeth, the mother of our country, our queen of hearts.

The people across the four nations of the United Kingdom owe so much to Her Majesty the Queen for providing steady continuity through war and peacetime, through the peaks and troughs of change. So we feel a sense of deep grief across our United Kingdom for the loss of our eternal mother. For me personally, I feel a special affection as my own mother was of the same generation and met my father during the war, when he served in the Royal Navy.

Elizabeth bore the weight of the United Kingdom on her young shoulders from the age of 25, when Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister, for over 70 years of global change. She has been an anchor for Britain in a sea of change through 15 Prime Ministers, 14 US Presidents and seven Popes, supporting the world with the long-term interests of her communities and nations in mind, not the short-term expedients of others. As a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, she had to lead a family often in personal turbulence, in the public view, with a steady hand, carefully balancing the interests of the country with those of her own family.

I had the privilege of meeting the Queen briefly on behalf of Swansea West on a few occasions since 2010. In those fleeting moments, I could appreciate her wisdom and quiet gravity amid her sunny demeanour whatever the weather. She will remain loved by so many millions for so many things. Her continuity has helped anchor our fundamental values of fairness and democracy amid the undulating changes of political leadership, and the storms and sunshine of global events.

We shall never forget the Queen, and the people of Wales—and of Swansea West—will always hold her in our hearts for her service and devotion to our country. Our thoughts are of course with her family, wishing them strength at this most difficult time, and the comfort of remembering, with love and affection, the happy times shared together as a family with Elizabeth, who will continue to live in our hearts.

Finally, for Swansea West, I recall how on 14 May 1946 Elizabeth, at the tender age of 20, attended a recital of poetry at Wigmore Hall with her mother, Queen Elizabeth, and sister, Princess Margaret. There Dylan Thomas, Wales's greatest poet—born in Uplands in my constituency of Swansea West—read “Fern Hill”. The last verse reads:

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me

Up to the swallow-thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh, as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.”

Diolch yn fawr, Elizabeth. Rest in peace. God save the King, and the Prince and Princess of Wales.

2.57 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to pay tribute to Her late Majesty.

In an interview yesterday, the mayor of Milton Keynes, Amanda Marlow, was asked what Her late Majesty meant to the people of Milton Keynes, and she replied simply that she was “everything”. That is partly due to the fact that Milton Keynes as we know it today was founded, was built and flourished as a new city during her reign. From a collection of north Buckinghamshire towns and villages to the thriving city we know today, Milton Keynes developed under her.

Her late Majesty visited many times to celebrate our history, whether that was to go to the railway works at Wolverton, which has been home to the royal train for many years, or Bletchley Park in my constituency, which she visited about 10 years ago to unveil a memorial to the codebreakers there. Members who have had a royal visit will know that these are often planned to the last minute, if not second, but such was her interest and that of the late Duke of Edinburgh that the timetable went completely out of the window, because she was so engrossed in celebrating the achievements of the codebreakers.

As well as our history, the Queen was there to celebrate our development. Whether it was the opening of the Open University, our new city centre or the football stadium, she has been there for every part of Milton Keynes’s development. But the greatest honour came just a few months ago, at the platinum jubilee, when she had the grace to bestow city status upon us. At the heart of our bid was the fact that Milton Keynes is made up of many different communities, from the vast majority, if not all, of the countries in the Commonwealth. That, of course, is something that she enormously cherished.

Finally, I noticed that yesterday, in his fine speech, the Leader of the Opposition quoted some lines from Philip Larkin, one of the Queen’s poet laureates. I would like to conclude by quoting a short poem by another of her poet laureates, Sir John Betjeman, called “The Last Laugh”. It reads:

“I made hay while the sun shone.
My work sold.
Now, if the harvest is over
And the world cold,
Give me the bonus of laughter
As I lose hold.”

I very much hope that Her late Majesty did keep her well-known sense of humour to the end, and that once the period of grief and mourning at her loss has passed, we may all, as individuals and as a nation, smile and remember with joy what she meant to us and did for us. Thank you, Ma’am. God save the King.

3.1 pm

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I rise on behalf of myself and my constituents to pay tribute to our longest serving monarch. Underpinned by her Christian faith, she gave a life of service, built on that firm foundation, and for that we give thanks and celebrate, in the words of the King, “a life well lived.”

The Queen owned the Duchy of Lancaster, so she always had a strong tie to my constituency. To us in Lancaster, she was known as the Duke of Lancaster, which can catch visitors out; if anyone is ever invited to sing our national anthem in Lancaster, they will find that the words are slightly different, as we sing, “God save the Duke” instead of the more traditional words.

Because of that strong tie, the Queen visited many times. She visited Lancaster Priory in 1999 to mark the 600th anniversary of this important link between the Crown and the Duchy of Lancaster. She also personally approved the grant of a charter that constituted the University of Lancaster back in 1964. She made many visits to Lancaster castle. She visited it three times: in 1969, before I was born; in 1977, before I was born; and in May 2015, days after I was elected as the Member of Parliament. When the declaration was made and I was handed an envelope as a newly elected Member, I got an additional envelope saying, “In a few days’ time, you will be meeting the Queen. Do you have a hat?” I do not think they meant the Barrow A.F.C bobble hat. Utterly terrified, and before I had made my maiden speech, I found myself stood by platform 3 at Lancaster station as the royal train rolled in. Unusually for Lancaster, which is normally gloriously sunny all the time, the heavens opened and it poured with rain. At that point, I realised that hundreds and hundreds of my constituents were stood out in this pouring rain lining the streets to welcome Her Majesty, in the hope of perhaps catching a glimpse of her. That brought home to me the power that the Queen had to bring people from all walks of life and from all generations together. As a newly elected MP, that was an important lesson for me to realise.

The Queen also visited other parts of my constituency, from the rural farms to the renowned Rossall School in Fleetwood, which she visited in 1994 to mark its 150th anniversary. Following correspondence that I have received in the past 48 hours, it is clear that my constituents who had the good fortune of meeting her now have memories that will last a lifetime. So as the sun sets on this second Elizabethan age, we give thanks that our nation has had the good fortune to have the Queen serve us for 70 years. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

3.4 pm

John Glen (Salisbury) (Con): I rise to speak today on behalf of my Salisbury constituents. I wish to start by acknowledging the unique contribution that Her Majesty has made to our nation, the Commonwealth and the world. We will never see a monarch reign through so many decades. The overwhelming grief, sadness and disorientation that our nation is now experiencing is in proportion to and a direct consequence of the enormous role that Her Majesty played in our lives. As King Charles said in his moving address last evening, thank you, Queen Elizabeth. Thank you for your gracious presence in our lives.

Many of her subjects will never have met the Queen, but everyone felt that they knew her and that she cared for them. I have sat in this Chamber these past two days and heard so many wonderful speeches from colleagues on both sides of the House. I was moved by the sheer breadth and depth of the impact that Her Majesty has had in every corner of her United Kingdom and beyond.

Much has been said about her devotion to her family, her love of the countryside, horses and her beloved corgis, her humour, her kindness and the enduring impact of that remarkable smile that warmed the hearts and left an indelible impression seared into the soul of anyone she encountered. I cannot offer anecdotes from time spent at Balmoral, Sandringham or encounters at the Palace, but I feel no less privileged for that. None

[John Glen]

the less, I did meet Her Majesty when she visited Salisbury in 2012 in her diamond jubilee year. She visited the Rifles Regimental Museum in Salisbury Cathedral Close, our cathedral and an exhibition of our country's history and communities on the cathedral lawn.

The abiding memory I will have is one of a sublime peacefulness, an aura of sincerity as she engaged so generously in so many conversations with my constituents. Each morning in my constituency home overlooking the great cathedral—I am so fortunate—I reflect on the day ahead. Looking out of my window, I have two pictures on the window ledge: one of my beloved parents and one of me shaking the hand of Her Majesty a few metres away. I met her once, but I think she will always be with me in my service in Salisbury.

Her Majesty led a life that was animated and fuelled by a deep Christian faith that sustained her through life's highs and lows. I think that this will be the strongest legacy that she will leave me with. Her life was driven by duty, but sustained in full submission to the Gospel of Christ and his teachings. I thank God for what he showed us about his character through Her Majesty's wonderful life. God save the King.

3.7 pm

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): I rise on behalf of my constituents in the City of Chester. What is so telling to me as I listen to hon. and right hon. Members across the House is that, among the grief and the sadness, there is laughter and smiles. The Queen had that ability to make us smile and laugh, which is so important to remember today. For me, two factors stand out on the death of Her late Majesty. The first is the fidelity that she gave to that pledge she made in Cape Town on her 21st birthday to dedicate her life to service. Never in history can a promise have been kept so faithfully for so long. She embodied dignity, service and dedication.

Secondly, I must think of the royal family and the personal loss that they have felt. The fortitude that they are showing, especially our King, at a time of bleak bereavement is a clear sign of the fine man he is and the fine king he will be. I noticed how quickly he connected with people yesterday when he returned to Buckingham Palace. May he and his family take comfort from the shared grief that the whole nation and the Commonwealth are feeling.

Her Majesty, as many have said, was the rock of certainty and reliability around which the maelstrom of an ever-changing world would circle like a hurricane. She was a beacon of hopes, a fulcrum of dependability. From the post-war austerity, through the swinging sixties, the permissive society, the space age, globalisation, the age of the internet and the worldwide web, and the coronavirus pandemic, she saw it all and moved with the times, but she also acted as an anchor of stability and security in the storm of the changes that the world saw.

She came to Chester in June 2018 to open Storyhouse, our new theatre and arts centre. The whole city was bouncing and buzzing. She, the lord mayor and a couple of others crammed into a small lift to go to the upper floors of our new theatre. "Doors are closing," said the

automatic voice of the lift. "Yes," said Her Majesty, "I think we can all see that." Again, it was one of those examples of her using a little humour to put everyone at their ease, particularly in the tight space of the lift.

I am so grateful that in Chester and across the realm we were able to celebrate the platinum jubilee earlier this year, so that she could see the love and gratitude of all of us for that life of service. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

3.10 pm

Mrs Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con): Thank you very much for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I, along with most people in South Derbyshire, am so sad that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth has left us. I, on behalf of the constituents of South Derbyshire, send our heartfelt condolences to the royal family. We have been so lucky for most of our lifetimes to have a Queen who has been totally dedicated to public service and duty. Queen Elizabeth showed us public servants how it should be done, and she remains an inspiration to me, as she has been for so many other people.

I was lucky enough to have the honour of meeting her twice, once in Derby and once in Buckingham Palace. Both moments I will cherish for the rest of my days. At Buckingham Palace I was with my dear departed husband and spent a wonderful evening chatting with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. All around us were buckets catching raindrops from a dodgy roof, which gave me the opportunity to share our mutual grief over leaking roofs and the different ways to try to fix them—probably not a conversation that many others have had with the Queen. She was amazingly knowledgeable on this subject, as on so much else.

To close, our constitutional monarchy and its ability to adapt and change with the times is the envy of the world. None of us politicians is more important than our monarch. Ministers come and go, while the continuity of our monarchy provides us with an important balance of power, of which I am proud. May our beloved Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace, and long live King Charles III.

3.13 pm

Sarah Green (Chesham and Amersham) (LD): It is an honour to rise today to pay tribute to Her late Majesty on behalf of my constituents in Chesham and Amersham.

As we know, the late Queen came to the throne having seen the torment and consequences of war, at a time when she was still grieving for a much loved father and consoling her own mother. We are honouring someone who epitomised service and fulfilled a promise made over seven decades ago. I know that I am not the only one humbled by her continued adherence to that promise throughout her extraordinary life.

Here was a woman who had a talent for connecting with people even if they had never met her. One constituent told me how he can remember waving flags as a young child at her coronation in 1953, and this year we came together once again to celebrate her platinum jubilee. Indeed, the person who lit the beacon in Chalfont St Peter was chosen from the select group of people who had lived in the village consistently since the Queen came to the throne in 1952. Attending those jubilee

events, it was absolutely clear just how well loved Her late Majesty was throughout Chesham and Amersham. I was told of her visit to us in 1985 as the patron of the Epilepsy Society, when she was greeted by a group of 1,200 schoolchildren.

Another constituent got in touch this morning to share his memory of witnessing the Queen going to thank Lord Salisbury for organising the flotilla on the Thames. He said:

“I saw a rough, tough forester with tears streaming down his cheeks, mothers and children hugging after exchanging a few words with Her Majesty, and she bestowed on me a cheeky grin with a shrug of her shoulders, just before climbing into the helicopter.”

It is these fond and often deeply personal memories that so many people have to share that is so striking.

While we remember Her late Majesty, I am mindful of the fact that His Majesty King Charles has come to the throne while grieving for his mother. I hope the knowledge that His Majesty's loss is shared by so many brings some comfort to him and the royal family. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

3.14 pm

Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con): I rise to express my deep condolences and those of my Mid Sussex constituents to the royal family and members of the royal household on the death of Her Majesty the Queen. We are all deeply thankful for her life of remarkable service; her encouragement, grace, fortitude and warmth simply cannot be matched, and have been a true inspiration both here and across the globe, as we have heard. She reached across the generations, supporting people young and slightly older, capturing the mood and always being a steady presence in good times and, sadly, worse times. We do not have enough words of thanks to cover the deep affection and devotion that we have for her—for her faithful and impeccable public service, and the commitment that she embodied and that we try to reflect in some small way. That was on display earlier this year as we all came together across Mid Sussex for street parties, concerts and church services to celebrate her platinum jubilee.

As was reflected on earlier in the contributions, from growing up to serving as one of her Ministers, the constancy and support of the Queen was always there. Growing up as a child in the '80s, with a female Speaker in the Chair and Lady Thatcher, I thought it seemed perfectly normal to have female leaders around us—I did not notice that there were also lots of men, but that is another story. Our Queen was absolutely there, by our side and always with us. She came to our county most recently in November 2017, but she was in Mid Sussex back in March 1999, when she formally opened the Triangle leisure centre in Burgess Hill with the Duke of Edinburgh and visited the town council and the help point. Many constituents have special memories of meeting the Queen, or receiving a card, a letter, or perhaps an honour for their contribution to the nation and our local community.

I, unlike other people, only caught a glimpse of her. As a reporter, I reported on the Queen coming to neighbouring or other constituencies, and I caught a glimpse of her back in 1984, in my neighbouring area where the South of England show is held. She is also present across the land on plaques in every single

constituency where she met people and gave comfort to them or supported them. I remember often having conversations with my grandmother about her, about what her handbag would look like and what colour she would be wearing—would it be teal, green, or cornflower? The Queen dressed for the occasion; she was a fashion icon as well.

The constancy and dedication that the Queen has shown is reflected in her son, our new King. His work with charities will continue in his son, our new Prince of Wales, and at this time of deep personal sorrow, we wish His Majesty and our new Prince and Princess of Wales well. He has had a long apprenticeship, and we look forward to seeing him shine. God save the King.

3.18 pm

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. Like many other people, I had the opportunity to meet the Queen. As a councillor, I attended the annual garden party at Buckingham Palace in 2010 with my late mother. My mother, like most British Nigerians who speak Yoruba, remarked that she was going to meet Iya Charlie, which translates to “Charles's mother”, and she proceeded to phone all her family members across London and Nigeria to tell them the good news that she was going to the palace. I remember seeing some of the other guests at the palace, and thinking how good it was to see so many members from the Commonwealth represented, all dressed in their national dress and uniform.

The one thing that the British Nigerian diaspora in the UK enjoy, in addition to our culture, hard work and education, is a good party. I remember my mother's face when she was presented with sandwiches and cakes at the garden party, because according to Nigerians, an event cannot be called a party without jollof rice. When I saw the Queen coming towards my mother and me, my mum said she would ask her about the food options. There was horror on my face; I could already see the headlines in the *Daily Mail*: “Councillor from Brixton kicks off at garden party”. I pleaded with my mother not to ask the Queen about the catering options, and I said that we would stop for KFC on the way home.

My constituency of Vauxhall is home to many people from around the Commonwealth. They are in Britain for a variety of reasons, but the one thing that united their vision of this country was the presence of the late Queen Elizabeth. The Queen is fondly remembered across Vauxhall. Long before air travel was common, King George VI and the royal family, including a young Elizabeth, would often depart for their visits from Waterloo station in my constituency, including for their royal visit to Canada in 1939, and the royal visit to South Africa in 1947. In March 1967, the late Queen opened the Queen Elizabeth hall in the Southbank Centre, and in 1977, she unveiled a plaque celebrating Jubilee Gardens, which were created for her silver jubilee. She returned to Vauxhall to officially open the transformed gardens on 25 October 2012, during her diamond jubilee year. Those gardens, which form a backdrop to the London Eye, continue to be one of London's most loved public spaces.

The Queen was a representative of our country like no other, and she represented our country like no one else. She had an unwavering commitment to public service for over 70 years, and despite the scrutiny that

[*Florence Eshalomi*]

she was under throughout her reign, her peerless dignity and leadership meant that she was always a source of pride. That pride was felt by so many people; when they travelled abroad, they were always asked about the Queen. Those becoming British citizens felt that pride when taking the oath of allegiance.

Now we must welcome King Charles III to the throne. I know from his visit to Vauxhall, and his personability and dignity, that he will follow in a long tradition. Psalm 62, verses 5 and 6, read:

“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.”

The Queen was not shaken. Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace.

3.22 pm

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): Thursday 8 September 2022 was the day that we all knew must come, but hoped fervently somehow would not. The waves of sadness that we all feel, as well as our acts of remembrance and contemplation, reflect the respect and love we feel for her, and acknowledge how she shaped our modern Elizabethan age. Her late Majesty was our constant. From her wise words and wry smile in her Christmas addresses, to the succour she gave in times of distress such as the pandemic, and in our daily lives through the presence of her image on our banknotes, coins and stamps, Her late Majesty was not just the keystone of our constitution; she was also stitched into the rich tapestry of our lives. I remember watching “News at Ten” with my grandmothers, who were of her generation. There would be fierce commentary on the clothing she had worn on a particular visit, but everybody would agree that she always looked wonderful in bright colours, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Mims Davies) mentioned.

We have a proud heritage of royalty in my constituency of Louth and Horncastle. Since 1066, the King’s champion has held the feudal manor of Scrivelsby. The role of the King’s champion is to gallop into Westminster Hall on horseback in full armour, and throw down the gauntlet—that is where the phrase comes from—to challenge any rivals to the incoming monarch. I very much hope that King Charles III will reinstate that tradition. The constituency is also the birthplace of King Henry IV, who was born in 1367 at Bolingbroke castle. In 1643, the constituency was the site of the very important battle of Winceby, in which the parliamentarians beat the royalists—perhaps we will gloss over that.

There is also RAF Coningsby, which Her late Majesty visited in 1976. It is the home not only of the Typhoon fast jets and the heroes who fly up into our skies to protect us at very short notice, but of the battle of Britain memorial flight—the historic planes that form part of any flypast over Buckingham Palace, as we saw with joy in the recent celebrations of Her late Majesty’s jubilee. The flight includes Spitfires, Hurricanes and a Thumper—one of only two remaining flying Lancasters in the world today. We know from the pictures of Her late Majesty on the balcony the joy that those flypasts

used to give her, so I am incredibly proud that my constituents played their part in bringing her such happiness.

On behalf of my constituents, I give thanks for Her late Majesty’s extraordinary public service over seven decades and for the more private acts of kindness, humour and humility that we have heard about in recent days in this place and on television. As we mourn the end of this great Elizabethan era, we look to the future and look with hope to the reign of King Charles III. He will lead our nation and the Commonwealth with the same devotion and skill as his beloved mother. He has our sincerest condolences for his loss, our admiration for his steadfast composure in assuming the Crown in the midst of his grief, and our heartfelt thanks for his quiet determination to serve our nation as well and as devotedly as his late mother. God save the King.

3.26 pm

Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab): The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) said something that chimed with all of us: that when we visit primary schools, the first question that children ask us is “Have you met Her Majesty the Queen?” I was asked the same question at Chapel Allerton Primary School in my constituency and at St Paul’s Catholic Primary School when I was there recently.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said that Her late Majesty the Queen will always remain the forever Queen. That reminded me of something my younger daughter Ruth told me yesterday: that when she went to school after the death of Her Majesty, one of the six-year-old pupils said, “But she’s been the Queen all my life!” My daughter said, “Mine, too—and by the way, my dad’s as well.” That is how long she has been with us.

I had three encounters with Her late Majesty and I remember them clearly. The first was when I was a councillor in Leeds. She came to a dinner at the banqueting suite in Leeds civic hall to celebrate and open the royal armouries, which had moved to the city of Leeds. We were very proud of that. She was struck with grief, because it was in the days after the Dunblane massacre. In those few hours that she was with us, her demeanour seemed to epitomise and sum up the grief that we all felt after that appalling tragedy.

Some years later, I was privileged to be at the golden jubilee event in Westminster Hall. I invited my dear late mother, of blessed memory, to sit with me. In a dignified address that those of us who were there will never forget, the Queen recounted stories about living in London during the blitz. My mother, who had been a child in London during the blitz, was in tears because the Queen had summed up so perfectly what life was like for everybody living through that terrible time.

The final encounter that I recall was the only time I ever had a conversation with Her late Majesty. Many hon. Members will recall that once a Parliament, Back Benchers were invited to Buckingham Palace. We were presented to Her Majesty; she came to the group that I was with, looked at my name badge and said, “Ah, you’re from Leeds, are you? Do you represent my cousin, the Earl of Harewood?” I said, “Yes, Ma’am—he’s in north-east Leeds.” She said, “Wasn’t there a fire on the set there?” I said, “Sorry, do you mean the set of—?”

She said, “Yes, that soap opera, ‘Emmerdale’.” I said, “Yes, you’re quite right, Ma’am. There was a fire there.” She said, “And have they now recovered?” I said, “Yes, indeed they have.” I was struck by her extraordinary knowledge of everyday life in our country, the programmes people watch on television and the life we lead, of which she was so much a part, woven into the fabric of our lives.

Let me conclude by saying, on behalf of the people of Roundhay, Moortown, Meanwood, Chapel Allerton and Alwoodley who make up north-east Leeds, “May she rest in eternal peace. Long live King Charles III.”

3.29 pm

Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con): Thank you for calling me to speak in this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I start by sending my heartfelt condolences to His Majesty the King and the entire royal family and royal household.

I rise today to express the love, gratitude and respect that all those who live in the Chichester constituency have for our late Queen. In all parts of the country, and indeed the Commonwealth, our late Queen has touched every generation. Our young still have fresh memories of planting saplings to mark the recent platinum jubilee, forming the Queen’s green canopy, which like her reign will live on for decades. Those of us a little older remember the street parties for her silver jubilee and still treasure the mugs and the memories—memories that remind us what it means to be British and of our unique traditions. In no other country anywhere in the world does the whole population celebrate by sitting in the middle of the street, usually in the rain, eating sponge cake—unique and highly differentiated.

Her late Majesty visited my constituency several times to offer support to the Chichester Festival Theatre. Her first visit was with His Royal Highness Prince Philip for the inaugural season in 1962, and they came back again in 1964 for a performance of “Othello” with Lord Olivier and Dame Maggie Smith. It was during her most recent visit that I had the incredible honour of meeting Her late Majesty. Growing up in Knowsley gives you many life stills, but a proper curtsy was not one of them, so after much more practice than I care to admit, I found myself awaiting introduction, placed between our bishop and our chief constable, who reassuringly were both as nervous as I was. As the Queen entered the room, as everyone has said, we were immediately struck by her smiling eyes. As I was introduced, she immediately smiled and said, “How long have you been the Member of Parliament for Chichester?” On hearing my reply—I had been elected just a few months earlier in 2017—she shot back, “Ah—you’re a snapper!” She was of course referring to the snap general election. She then asked me how it was all going, and I had to be truthful and admit it was not going all that well. She replied kindly, “Good luck. I think you may need it.” With experience comes wisdom. My brief introduction and the subsequent lunch with our late Queen is a memory I will treasure for ever.

The late Queen is an extraordinary role model for all of us, but she had marvellous role models in her parents. They had seen our country through the perils of the second world war, and her father had even seen action at the battle of Jutland in 1916. On the death of her father, Queen Elizabeth sent a message to her first

Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, which was read to this House on 11 February 1952. In it, she said that her father

“had set before me an example of selfless dedication which I resolved, with God’s help, to follow.”

I think we may all conclude that she honoured her promise to the British people and met it in full. On behalf of everyone in the Chichester constituency, I want to say thank you, for everything. God save the King.

3.33 pm

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): So many words have been said and written already about the late Queen, but I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak from the Back Benches today and pay tribute, on behalf of my constituents in Cardiff Central, to the late Queen.

Cardiff Central is a really young constituency; the average age of the people I represent is among the youngest of any constituency in the United Kingdom. So for nearly every one of them and for me, the late Queen is the only monarch that we have lived under. Being the constituency at the centre of the capital city of Wales, we were lucky in having the late Queen visit on many occasions. She always received a very warm Welsh welcome. In 1948, Princess Elizabeth, as she then was, was the first ever person to be awarded the freedom of Cardiff, and in July 1953, just a month after her coronation, she made her first official visit to Wales as Queen, visiting Cardiff Central, where thousands of well-wishers lined the route of the royal procession to Cardiff city hall. It was during the British Empire and Commonwealth games in 1958 that the Queen, in a recorded message to those assembled at Cardiff Arms Park, announced her intention to make her son Prince Charles—now King Charles—the Prince of Wales. Yesterday, our new King announced his decision to pass the title on to our new Prince and Princess of Wales, and we look forward to welcoming them back to Wales.

The late Queen was a dedicated patron of many charities and organisations across Wales including, for 50 years, the Welsh Rugby Union. To mark the centenary of the WRU in 1980, she wrote a message on a rugby ball which was relayed all the way from London via numerous rugby clubs in Wales before it eventually arrived at Cardiff Arms Park, where a joint England and Wales team played a joint Scotland and Ireland team in a special game to mark the centenary. In 1999, when we hosted the rugby world cup final at the brand new Millennium stadium, the Queen presented the trophy to the winning Australian team. Very many people have fond memories of those royal visits to Cardiff Central, and on behalf of my constituents I send our deepest sympathy and our gratitude to King Charles III and the royal family. It is gratitude for the late Queen’s absolute dedication to a lifetime of public service, her dignity and her decency. Thank you, Ma’am.

3.36 pm

Dame Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con): The overwhelming theme of the past two days has been our late Queen’s unparalleled service, duty and dedication. Those are qualities that are particularly understood and valued in my Gosport constituency, set as it is on the

[Dame Caroline Dinenage]

shores of Portsmouth harbour and firmly in the heart of our Royal Navy community. It is home to a vast number of service personnel and veterans, people who show enormous duty, dedication and service in every aspect of their professional lives. Not solely as their commander-in-chief, Her Majesty had very strong personal links to our armed forces. Her father was in the Royal Navy, she herself served in the second world war, and of course the enduring love of her life was that very handsome naval officer. The longest serving head of any military unit, she led by example, with an entire life and reign of service and duty.

One of my greatest memories was the Queen's visit, just a short hop away across Portsmouth harbour, for the commissioning ceremony of her namesake, the flagship Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, in December 2017. It took place in a mammoth hangar inside that colossal ship, packed full of members of the ship's company, their families, dignitaries and many more who served in her name. I watched that tiny figure, surrounded by enormous crowds and giant objects in that vast space: she was dressed in beautiful purple and commanded the respect, dedication, love and service of all those who gathered. She exuded warmth, putting them all at their ease.

It was quite a sight—an incredible woman, a female leader in the days decades before that was fashionable. She was in a job she had not applied for, with a responsibility she had not sought and a role that she was not even born to do. On her 21st birthday, as we have heard, she said:

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

If ever in history there was a promise or commitment that was kept, my goodness it was that one.

I have found great comfort in the past couple of days in seeing precious video clips of Her Majesty in her downtime, enjoying herself, cheering on her horses at Royal Ascot or petting her beloved corgis. It is clear, as many others have said, that she had a zest for life and a sense of mischief. She had the most incredible ability to surprise and delight us, and many have spoken of her mission with 007 and her love of marmalade sandwiches with Paddington Bear. Her Majesty once said:

"Grief is the price we pay for love."

The sadness that is felt by my constituents across Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington and Hill Head surely shows how much we all loved her. In the words of Paddington Bear:

"Thank you Ma'am, for everything."

God save the King.

3.39 pm

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): We are not required to be a slavish royalist or, indeed, a fanatical follower of the institution to recognise seven decades of extraordinary public service and duty, not just to the nations and regions of these islands but to the Commonwealth and as an influence in the wider world. Therefore, on behalf of my constituents, I extend my condolences and theirs to the royal family, who are remembering a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.

In Glasgow South West, Her Majesty opened the Govan walkway during the silver jubilee years. The walkway has panoramic views of many of Glasgow city's landmarks, including the shipyards that do so much for the Royal Navy. The Riverside Museum on the north side of the city is just across from the walkway, and many of the landmarks heading into Glasgow city centre can be seen. Govan also hosts a state-of-the-art medical facility, the largest hospital in these islands perhaps, the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, which provides so much medical treatment and care to thousands of people in Scotland.

I have heard many personal stories, and I am going to share one, which concerns my grandparents, Charlie and Isabel Alcorn, who on 3 July 2004 just one day before their diamond wedding anniversary received a letter and a card from Her Majesty. The sheer joy and delight that that gave my grandparents and the wider family, that 60 years of marriage was being recognised, I think is something that is shared not just by my grandparents but by many people across these islands. How many cards will His new Majesty give to people who celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary? I suggest not very many. It was of course a traditional marriage: my grandmother always graciously allowed my grandpa to think that he was head of the house—but we knew different.

As so many Members of the House have mentioned, it was about those small acts of Her late Majesty, those little acts of kindness. Those little acts are something that we should think about when we discuss our deliberations in this House. On behalf of my constituents, may she rest in peace.

3.42 pm

Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con): I rise to pay tribute on behalf of my constituents and myself to our late, great Queen Elizabeth. The Queen was a comforting constant through our lifetimes. She was indeed a unique beacon of wisdom, grace, kindness and courage at the head of our country and the Commonwealth for seven decades. She was the rock we turned to as a nation, in times of uncertainty and sadness, and when we celebrated occasions of national joy. Now our great Queen has gone, leaving a void in all our lives. As we mourn, our hearts go out to her family, as they grieve in their profound loss.

The Queen's was, by any measure, the most extraordinary of lives. She touched the lives of countless other people across the world. The first time I saw the Queen in person was as an excited 10-year-old, lined-up with others along the Bath Road in Reading during the silver jubilee celebrations, all of us clutching and waving our miniature Union flags as her car sped past. We only got a fleeting glimpse of Her Majesty, but we talked excitedly about the occasion for days afterwards. Such was the reaction she inspired, in world leaders and school children alike.

The first time I got to meet the Queen properly was in 2014, when she came to open formally the magnificently rebuilt Reading train station. I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I felt the same schoolboy excitement of 37 years earlier at the prospect of meeting Her Majesty. And this time I got to shake her hand. I will always cherish that moment, and a photograph of that occasion—of the Queen smiling that famous radiant

smile—is nestled among photographs of my family in our home. Other Members have already described the trepidation that is felt during the ceremony in which a Member joins the Privy Council and collects the seal of office as a Secretary of State—the worry about kneeling on those pesky footstools! But her Majesty would always be a kind, calming influence, and she had a unique ability to make one feel at ease. Other Members have already described the trepidation that is felt during the ceremony in which a Member joins the Privy Council and collects the seal of office as a Secretary of State—the worry about kneeling on those pesky footstools! But her Majesty would always be a kind, calming influence, and she had a unique ability to make one feel at ease.

We all know that the Queen and the royal family have championed many causes, and one of those is protecting our environment and planet. The Queen was sadly not able to attend COP26 in person as she had intended, but she was kind enough to share a message with world leaders, acknowledging her pride in the leading role played by Prince Philip, Prince Charles—now our King—and Prince William in encouraging people to protect our precious planet. Ending her remarks, she said:

“I, for one, hope that this conference will be one of those rare occasions where everyone will have the chance to rise above the politics of the moment, and achieve true statesmanship.

It is the hope of many that the legacy of this summit—written in the history books yet to be printed—will describe you as the leaders who did not pass up the opportunity; and that you answered the call of those future generations.”

That history is still to be written, and I hope and pray that the leaders of today, here in our own country and across the world, will heed the Queen’s wise words.

Now, of course, we have a new monarch, King Charles III, a long-standing leader in the fight against climate change. Through my work over the past few years on the COP26 agenda, I have had the privilege of supporting the work of King Charles’s sustainable markets initiative. He is a great man, and he will be a great monarch, with the same instinctive understanding of his people and what matters to them as his mother. God save the King.

3.46 pm

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): It is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and send my condolences to the royal family on behalf of the people of Preston. The Queen has been with most of us for all our lives, through many times of difficulty and crisis, including wars. Her reign began as the Korean war was just coming to an end, and ended six months into a war closer to home in Ukraine, which is having a huge economic and security effect on all our lives. She reigned through Suez, the Falklands, the Gulf war, Bosnia, Kosovo and Libya, to name just a few, and through pandemics such as covid and foot and mouth. She saw mass unemployment in the 1980s and our present cost of living crisis, the like of which this country has not seen in 40 years.

Throughout all those extremely difficult times, the nation could always look to the Queen for a sign that, whatever happened, life for most of us would continue and we would come out of the crisis at hand. She offered reassurance. She provided a sense of security, and a feeling that, because of the length of her reign

and the fact that she was around at the time of the second world war, life would go on in this country and most people would get through whatever difficulties we faced. Continuity was her hallmark.

We all have our own memories of our meetings with the Queen, but my fondest memories of her are of when Preston was selected to receive city status in 2002, the year of her golden jubilee. She came to Preston, and I had the pleasure of accompanying her, and chatting with her and Prince Philip, as she walked around the newly anointed city. She was charming, polite, witty, kind, and interested in taking the time to speak to people in the crowds of thousands who turned out to greet her. She will be an impossible act to follow, but I am confident that King Charles III will step up and make his own unique mark on our public life in this country. The right hon. Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma) commented on his views on climate change and I remember the work he was doing on conservation in eastern Europe. I am sure that he will make his mark and have his own influence on whichever Prime Minister serves in the future.

Rest in peace, Queen Elizabeth, and God save the King.

3.49 pm

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): It is a privilege to pay tribute personally and on behalf of the people of Harrogate and Knaresborough to Her late Majesty, one of the greatest figures in our national story. We send our deepest condolences to His Royal Highness the King and all members of the royal family.

Her late Majesty was a regular visitor to our part of Yorkshire. So many people have met her and beautiful stories have been shared. She was held very dear. The outpourings of love and grief at her passing have come from right across the community. The depth and breadth of emotion felt across the UK and the world shows her astonishing connections with us, her people.

Our relationship with Her late Majesty was profound and based on love, respect and inspiration over so long. A lady in my constituency told me that, when she was a young girl, during the war, she looked up to the young princesses and their role in our national effort. That was over 80 years ago.

I never met Her late Majesty; I never knew her, but I felt like she knew me. In her broadcasts, she spoke to our hearts. She has been a part of our lives—almost a part of our families. The depth of the grief that we are now all individually and collectively feeling shows that we are starting to understand just what she has given us: how she helped us through tough times and how she helped to make our country, and so many others, better places—immeasurably so.

The tributes in this Chamber, across our communities and across the world have highlighted the magic that Her late Majesty brought to all that she did. Her remarkable life leaves a powerful legacy. She has defined the standard for service: wisdom and compassion; dignity and humility; speaking less but saying more; and, above all, duty. There is a deep sense of loss for a beloved figure. From the people of Harrogate and Knaresborough, I say: thank you. May Her late Majesty rest in peace. God save the King.

3.51 pm

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I never met Her late Majesty the Queen but I have been in her garden. She was a unifying presence for all of us, and her loss after a remarkable, iconic 96-year life leaves a huge hole. Recent years have seen her starring with Paddington Bear and James Bond, demonstrating her sense of fun alongside her sense of duty.

For me, memories of that remarkable reign start with the silver jubilee in 1977. I remember my five-year-old mind being blown by the fact that I was sitting eating cake in the middle of Pithanger Lane, a busy thoroughfare in Ealing. It was transformed for my first-ever street party; I went to dozens more as MP for the Queen's platinum jubilee.

The Queen was a constant comforting presence, from her early days, as Princess Elizabeth, telling evacuated wartime kids not to worry, right up—by that time, she had mastered Zoom—to her covid reassurance, giving the same message to a worried nation. Her remarkable reign spanned 15 Prime Ministers, from Churchill when she was just 25 years old to her 15th this week, when she was obviously the older and wiser one, with the current PM half her age. She was Head of State to 15 other nations. She oversaw the transition from empire to Commonwealth.

However, for locals my age, it will always be 1985 that we remember, when the Queen opened Ealing Broadway shopping centre. It felt that half the school had bunked off for it—except square old me. Many classmates who pulled a sickie got rumbled when the teacher saw them on the evening news, but she could not get too cross. This year, I actually requested that my sixth-former son be let off lessons for the Queen's garden party. The teacher allowed it, making his absence part of their lesson on constitutional monarchy—which, of course, the Queen personified superlatively. Her seemingly limitless work ethic and workload continued until two days before her death—but the signs were there, with her non-attendance at the last garden party and at the Queen's Speech, both delegated to the now King.

Even sceptics who came into her orbit became converts. Kieron Gavan, mayor of Ealing in 2002, when the Queen came to Gunnersbury Park for the golden jubilee, said:

"I asked if she was ever tempted to take the head off while knighting with her sword someone she didn't like. She replied that it'd be totally inappropriate. But she might nick the neck a tiny bit if they're particularly irritating."

He told me that she was charming, witty, smiley and utterly delightful company. Kieron said:

"I'm a republican but became a huge fan, if she had stood for election I'd have voted for her."

We will never see her like again. She trained as a mechanic in the war, had children from the 40s to 60s who kept the line going, presided over United Nations and Commonwealth summits and was genuinely beloved. The words "end of the era" cannot sum up 70 years, but as the Elizabethan era ends, another begins. It will take some time to get used to, and there will be new stamps and coins in time. May she rest in eternal peace. God save the King.

3.55 pm

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak

about the long and dedicated life of Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of my constituents in Harrow East, my friends and family, and myself.

Harrow has a unique royal link, being the first borough created when Her Majesty the Queen came to the throne. We have had many royal visits, over many years, and we have celebrated every jubilee. Earlier this year, we celebrated the platinum jubilee with civic functions but, more importantly, with the street parties that many hon. Members have spoken about.

I want to mention two of those visits, which contrast the way that Harrow, and indeed the country, changed during the Queen's reign. The first was some 50 years ago, when she visited Harrow School on the 400th anniversary of its creation—it is far better than that school just down the road from Windsor castle. The second visit demonstrates that within our borough Harrow now has people from literally every country on the planet, every religion and every language spoken on earth. That visit was during her diamond jubilee in 2012, when we celebrated her coming to Krishna Avanti Primary School, the first state-sponsored Hindu primary school in the country, where children from across the borough came together to meet her.

On my personal memories, I remember parading at Windsor castle as a Queen's Scout and meeting the Queen at her garden parties as a councillor, a member of the London Assembly and an MP. My favourite memory was as a newly elected MP being allowed to drive through the gates of Buckingham Palace and park in the centre of the palace, before climbing the stairs and being greeted by Her Majesty the Queen directly.

I am an avowed royalist and monarchist, and we pass on our grief to the royal family for the loss of Her Majesty the Queen. It is fair to say that King Charles III has had the longest apprenticeship in history and he has already demonstrated the wisdom of having the hereditary system to those who do not believe in it. To Her Majesty the Queen we say, "God bless. Thank you for your dedicated service, ma'am. Om Shanti. Rest in peace." And to King Charles III we say, "May you live a long life. Long live the King."

3.58 pm

Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab): I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Luton North.

Our country has lost its Queen, and a family have lost their cherished mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. My thoughts are with the royal family during this immense time of loss and with the people mourning the death of the Sovereign who played such a pivotal role in their lives for so many years. Many will have sadly experienced the painful hole left after the death of the head of a family—a matriarch—and they will know the emptiness that echoes through the generations because a loved one is no longer there, but they will also know the fullness of a lifetime of lessons and devotion—those things never leave us.

Since news of her death, there have been displays of affection for the Queen across Luton North, but especially from younger generations. Yesterday morning, students at Lea Manor High School lined up outside school to pay their respects, Luton Sixth Form College fell silent in remembrance, there was time for reflective prayer at

Cardinal Newman Catholic School and the headteacher at Chalk Hill Academy addressed students and staff about the need to mourn, but also to honour and celebrate the Queen's life.

What better place to honour significant occasions than in Luton. Indeed, Her late Majesty chose Luton to mark a very significant life event, celebrating her honeymoon with Prince Philip in Luton Hoo.

They say that some things cannot be fixed but can only be carried, and the Queen was the master of carrying on. Whether it was during the second world war, at times of national crisis or, most recently, during the pandemic, the Queen was the epitome of the British phrase, "Keep calm and carry on"—easy to say, but often harder to do, especially during times of grief. I understand that her Christian faith was a driver in that, because she was never shy about her beliefs and how they motivated her service. I know that churches, mosques and temples in my diverse constituency will be keeping the royal family and the country in their prayers during this period of mourning. Sundon Park Baptist Church has opened a book of condolence, and I know that many others will be doing the same.

The Queen came to power when the nation was recovering from the aftermath of war. The King comes to power at a time when the world is also recovering and facing many challenges. In 2002, during her Christmas broadcast, the Queen spoke words that are just as relevant today, nearly 20 years on:

"Our modern world places such heavy demands on our time and attention that the need to remember our responsibilities to others is greater than ever."

Wise, wise words. We do not have to be staunch royalists to appreciate that, in every sense, this is truly the end of an era and the beginning of another. Rest in peace, Your Majesty.

4.1 pm

David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): On behalf of my constituency and my whole community, I cannot convey how heartbroken we are to lose Her Majesty the Queen. I had the honour of meeting Her Majesty in October 2013. She asked me about my constituency and community, and about how we were all getting on. She was very warm and down to earth.

Her Majesty the Queen was no stranger to Morecambe and my surrounding district. She visited Morecambe not long after her coronation, in April 1955, signing a royal portrait. In August 1989, she visited Heysham port en route to her beloved Balmoral. My whole community welcomed her in Morecambe in July 1999, when she unveiled the Eric Morecambe statue. The Queen told David Miles, president of the Eric Morecambe fan club, that both Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh were big fans of Morecambe and Wise, and of Eric Bartholomew—or Eric Morecambe, as everybody else knows him.

We also have royal patronage in our area. The shifting course of the River Kent, and the fast-moving tides in the area, make leading a safe crossing across Morecambe bay a very perilous task. In 1985, the Queen's Guide to the Sands, Cedric Robinson, guided Prince Philip across the sands on a horse-drawn carriage.

Today I remember Her Majesty's reign in my life with fondness, and the past few days with very deep and great sadness. Only a few weeks ago, I welcomed King

Charles to the Winter Gardens to see what my community has done with a marvellous old building, and to visit the Eden North site. May Her Majesty rest in peace. My thoughts are with all the royal family. God save the King.

4.3 pm

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak on behalf of people in Plymouth to express our condolences to the royal family on the death of the Queen. I have dated a lot of queens in my time, but I have only ever met the Queen once, shortly after being elected in 2018. It was a wet day at Plymouth train station, and I was doubly excited. First, as a train nerd, I was going to get a sight of the royal train. We do not get regal rolling stock in Devon very often, so I was excited about that. Secondly, it was a chance to see a true icon of our age, a leader like no other—the Queen. She toddled off the train, meeting the dignitaries and looking resplendent in a pink outfit and a pink hat. I looked down at my tie, which was bright pink as well, and thought to myself, "Queens really do wear pink." When she got to me, she said, "Why aren't you in Parliament?" I thought, "Oh dear, I'd better get this right." I said, "Well, the Whips let me off." She said, "I would hope they did, too." She gave me a little smile, and I thought, "That was all okay." That was the spirit of the Queen—meeting so many people and putting them at ease.

The Queen was in Plymouth that day to decommission HMS Ocean before it sailed to Brazil. As the head of our armed forces, she visited Plymouth and Devonport dockyard on number of occasions. She was very much part of our military command structure, our Royal Navy and our Royal Marines. She first visited in 1942, at the age of just 16, visiting the dockyards with her father, King George VI. Four years later, she visited again as a sea ranger to see the battleship HMS Duke of York.

The Queen's visits to our city parallel our recovery, from the ashes of the Plymouth Blitz to the renewal and evolution of our military tactics with the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, the rebuilding of Plymouth city centre and the opening of the civic centre in 1962. In 1988, as we marked the 400th anniversary of the Spanish armada, she opened the sundial in Plymouth city centre, giving our teenagers somewhere to meet their mates in town in the almost 40 years since.

The Queen leaves an incredible legacy. As a daughter, wife and mother to Royal Navy officers, her links to the Royal Navy, and to Devonport in particular, are plentiful. They include not just when she presents the Navy with new colours, as she did in 2003, but her many visits to express sorrow for the members of our armed forces family we lost in action. Often those were visits without fanfare, and conversations with real heart.

For my generation, the Queen was the grandma to the nation, a towering figure of female leadership. For a lifetime of devotion, selfless public service and duty, we say thank you. Long live the King.

4.6 pm

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): I rise with humility and sadness on behalf of myself and the people of Banff and Buchan to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. I also offer my condolences to King

[David Duguid]

Charles III and the royal family, as we remember that they have lost a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.

For most of us, Her Majesty has always been a continuing and reassuring presence. From the ashes of the second world war to the covid-19 pandemic in more recent years, she has been there providing reassurance and inspiration to people right across our United Kingdom. She has also been a much-admired and loved figure across the Commonwealth, but also right around the world.

Sadly, unlike many others in this place, I never had the opportunity to meet the Queen. However, given that I have grown up and lived in, and now represent in this place, one of three constituencies in Aberdeenshire, it will perhaps come as no surprise that I know a fair few people who have had the privilege not only of meeting the Queen, but of actually knowing her. Listening to the tributes from right hon. and hon. Members over the last two days, I recognise the warmth and affection in the stories of those who knew her.

We have all heard how well Her Majesty could make people feel at ease, whether in a formal or a social setting. That was not just a matter of decorum or of being a nice and kind person, which of course she very much was. She somehow knew—she somehow had this sixth sense or superpower that told her—precisely what action she needed to take to make that one individual feel at ease.

As a Member of Parliament, the closest I ever got to the Queen was in the peers lobby, watching the state opening of Parliament on a screen. Before I was elected, however, Her Majesty was at the Turriff agricultural show in my hometown in 2014, on the occasion of the show's 150th anniversary. On that occasion, I was able to get as close to the Queen as I find myself now to my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts). I found myself in the adoring crowd through which Her Majesty was moving so gracefully, as she always did. She was engaging with everyone, as she did, with that famous smile and twinkling eye we have heard so much about in the last two days—a smile with which we have all become very familiar and which we will always remember.

The organisers of the Turriff show whom the Queen met that day were moved by her humility, warmth and humour, not to mention her expert knowledge of the livestock and animals on display—horses, of course, being a particularly passion for Her Majesty, as they are for her daughter, the Princess Royal, who returned to visit the show earlier this year. The people of Turriff will remember fondly the visit of Her late Majesty, as will the people of Fraserburgh, which she visited in 1992 to celebrate the town's 400th anniversary, and of Macduff and Banff, which she visited on a launch from the Royal Yacht Britannia in 1961.

In Scotland, we saw the Queen at her most relaxed and happy, particularly on her regular visits to her much-loved Balmoral in west Aberdeenshire. We have heard stories from her stays there, including from former Prime Ministers who had the joy of being driven around the Balmoral estate by the Queen herself in a Land

Rover. I know that it will have been a comfort to her and her family that she spent her last days in the place that she loved so much.

The United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the world will come together in the coming days to mourn the passing of a great—perhaps the greatest—world leader. As we reflect on her long life and reign of loyal service, we also remember fondly her compassion, humour and warmth. She continues to be in all our hearts. May Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace. God save the King.

4.11 pm

Mrs Paulette Hamilton (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents in Birmingham, Erdington, I offer my sincere condolences following the passing of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Our thoughts and prayers are with the King and the royal family at this time. The sad loss of our greatest and longest serving monarch is being felt around the world, and she will be greatly missed, but we should also celebrate her lifetime of extraordinary service to our nation. The Queen's devotion to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth should be an inspiration to us all. Her dedication to the Christian faith, as the head of the Church of England, was also a shining example of duty and integrity.

Most people across our country have never known a time when the Queen was not there, and that is especially true for me as one of our Birmingham MPs, as I represent the youngest city in Europe. During her 70-year reign, the Queen visited Birmingham over a dozen times, including Castle Vale and the Jaguar car factory in my constituency in 1998. She met thousands of local people during that time, and we know that every person she met went away with a memory that will be treasured for a lifetime.

As a Birmingham City councillor, I had the privilege of being invited to share afternoon tea with members of the royal family at Buckingham Palace and to talk about my work to improve mental health in Birmingham. The time I spent there was an honour. I will never forget that the royal family showed me a true commitment to tackling real issues, such as mental health, and I know that that commitment will continue under the new King.

I also want to mention the Queen's incredible ability to bring diverse communities together in celebration. This summer, I lost count of the number of amazing events I attended at local schools and community groups to celebrate the historic platinum jubilee with food, music, games and of course dancing in Her Majesty's honour. This is a sad occasion, but the Queen has left such a positive legacy for us to celebrate. On behalf of the people of Erdington, Kingstanding and Castle Vale, I offer my deepest condolences. God save the King.

4.14 pm

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): I rise humbly and with great sadness to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of my family, my constituents and the people of Worcestershire. The late Queen was an inspiration and an example to us all. She taught us the true meaning of duty, and she reigned and worked for so long and so hard.

More than 85% of the population of this country have never known anybody but the Queen as monarch, and nearly one third of the population say they have met or seen her. Many of my constituents have told me about their own interactions, whether it be the Queen putting them at ease when they received an honour at the Palace, chatting to her at an event in the constituency or just seeing her from afar at a sporting event. Of course, we all knew her special love for racing.

Millions more never saw the Queen but nevertheless felt there was an intimate relationship because of the way she communicated. When she gave her Christmas broadcast, it felt like she was there with us in our own home. When she told us that we will meet again, it was as if she were sending that message to us all individually and personally. Of course she remains, and will remain for some time, on 29 billion coins and 4.5 billion banknotes. We will be seeing the Queen and thinking of her for a long time to come.

I first saw the Queen when I was at university and her impending visit led to a considerable refurbishment of the student common room, for which we were very grateful, but I fear it may have added to the legend that wherever the monarch goes smells of fresh paint.

The last time I saw Her Majesty was at the launch of the Queen's baton relay last October outside Buckingham Palace, where she placed her message to the Commonwealth, to be read out at the opening ceremony, into the baton and handed it to Kadeena Cox, the athlete. The baton then started its journey around the 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth, visiting many of the constituencies represented by Members in this Chamber. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people turned out to cheer on the baton bearers and the baton but, of course, it was the Queen's baton—we were also cheering on Her Majesty. I am so pleased that we were all able to show our love and affection for her, and that she saw it during the jubilee celebrations this year.

The Queen was the epitome of duty, service, dignity and grace. Her constitutional powers were limited, but her global influence was immense. Because of the way she conducted herself and the way she wore the Crown, no matter what any of us here can do, it will be as nothing to what a call, an invitation or a visit from Her late Majesty could do.

All of us who saw King Charles's speech last night will have also seen glimpses of his mother. He appeared well aware of the awesome responsibility ahead of him. He was regal yet relatable, expressing love and warmth that consoled us all. So we say goodbye to the Queen and the Elizabethan age, but we will never forget her. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

4.17 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): Like so many people, I have only known a world in which Queen Elizabeth II was our Queen. The wonderful tributes we have heard often include reference to the amazing longevity of her reign, and I was reminded of this when I looked at the dates of her many visits to Sefton. When the Queen first visited Bootle, Crosby and Southport in the early 1950s, they were all in the county of Lancashire. They became part of the borough of Sefton only some 20 years later with local government reorganisation, which is a story familiar to many people across the country.

The Queen also visited Bootle in 1962 and as part of her silver jubilee tour in 1977. She went to the Altcar training camp in my constituency in 1985, and she went to Southport again on the same visit. Aintree racecourse is in my Sefton Central constituency and is, of course, home to the world's most famous horserace. Given the Queen's love of horses, it is perhaps no surprise that she first attended the grand national in 1956, and it is fitting that Red Rum saved his record third win in the grand national for 1977 and the Queen's silver jubilee.

People across Sefton have fond memories of the Queen's visits, and none more so than in 1993 when she joined the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the battle of the Atlantic at Bootle town hall. The links to the armed forces and to the merchant navy, which she recognised through her visits to Sefton, have provided service personnel and civilians with fond memories and demonstrated her gratitude for their service to our nation.

The messages of condolence from my constituents have displayed warmth and gratitude to the Queen. Memories of her will be treasured for years to come. Queen Elizabeth II did her duty for my constituents and deserves our heartfelt thanks for her service to our nation. May she rest in peace. Long live the King.

4.20 pm

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to express respect, sorrow and thanks to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Crawley, myself and my family. Since we heard the news that we all feared on Thursday with her passing away, much has been said about how she had been a constant presence in our lives personally and nationally. Few people alive today had known any monarch but Her late Majesty.

On the Queen passing away, my thoughts went to the first time I ever saw her. I was born and spent my early formative years in the Epsom area of Surrey and, when I was a young child, my late mum took my brother and I up to the Derby at Epsom. Much has been said about Her late Majesty's great love of horse-racing; she attended the Derby virtually every year of her reign. We positioned ourselves about half a mile down the road, where we knew her official car would be leaving after the race. I remember waving my Union Jack—I have had a passion for flags ever since as a vexillologist—and, as her car passed, she was wearing those vivid, bright colours that she always did so that people at public events could see her. I was amazed when she waved back.

More than three decades later, I had the distinct honour and privilege of officially greeting Her late Majesty the Queen when she visited Crawley. At the time, I was the leader of West Sussex County Council, and one of her duties that day was to open Thomas Bennett Community College: a school that had been rebuilt. With great nervousness and excitement, I met our monarch and, as she did for all functions and occasions, she carried out her duties in a way that put people at ease and allowed our whole community to celebrate.

Her late Majesty had visited my Crawley constituency on five previous occasions in an official capacity. First, in 1950, when she was the Princess Elizabeth, she came to open what is now one of the largest industrial estates

[Henry Smith]

in the country. Apparently, she had looked over the old tithe maps of where it was to be located and named it Manor Royal.

In 1958, as our sovereign, Her late Majesty came back to my constituency to officially open Gatwick airport: the world's busiest single-runway airport and a great driver of the local economy. Her next visit was in 1969—the year I was born—when she came to officially open Holy Trinity school, which is soon to be rebuilt. Her next visit was in 1982, to lay the foundation stone of St Catherine's Hospice. In 1988, she went back to Gatwick airport to open the north terminal.

We all feel that we have lost somebody to whom we have a personal connection, even though she was a mother not only to this United Kingdom, but to the Commonwealth, and was recognised and respected throughout the world. That was typified on 11 September 2001, when she spoke about grief being the price we pay for love after the attacks in the United States. That is so true.

With great respect and interest, I watched His Majesty's address last night from Buckingham Palace. I am grateful for the message that the service that we had from the Queen will be continued in the reign of Charles III. We in this country are fortunate to have a constitutional monarchy, and long may that continue. May God rest the soul of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. May God give wisdom to His Majesty King Charles III. God save the King.

4.26 pm

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make this tribute on behalf of the people of Richmond Park. It was in our constituency that the first Queen Elizabeth passed away in 1603 at Richmond Palace. It is a great privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents at the conclusion of the equally great and historic reign of the second Queen Elizabeth.

I will offer a personal reflection on the Queen. When I heard the sad news of her death on Thursday, my mind went back to April 2020. As everyone will remember, we had just gone into an unprecedented lockdown in response to a terrifying pandemic. I was a newly elected MP, suddenly receiving hundreds of emails from constituents who had complex questions and requests, and who were sharing stories of great sacrifice and suffering. I did not know how best to support them. As a parent, I saw my young children sitting at home, staring out of the window and wondering when their lives would restart. I was beset by uncertainty about what would happen next and it felt almost overwhelming.

Then came the Queen's message, with that gentle but firm insistence that, "We will meet again." That message that the road ahead might not be visible, but that we would get to the other side, meant so much to me. It resonated partly because, as many hon. Members have said, the Queen was someone I had always known and respected, so I intrinsically trusted her. It was also the knowledge that her great age gave her the perspective that however dark the current day, better days would come. But I think it was also that she was our nation's link to the past and all our previous ages. She reflected

all the troubles and triumphs of our nation's past that have brought us to this point. Her message at that point was tremendously reassuring to me and, I know, to thousands of others.

Of course, the Queen was right. It was wonderful to come together for her platinum jubilee this summer. We had fantastic celebrations across Richmond Park and it was a particular pleasure to join the very joyful jubilee party at The Queen's School, Kew, which is named after Her late Majesty. There could not have been a better opportunity for all of us to have a national celebration than in honour of the woman who has always united and elevated us. I am so glad that we had the opportunity to celebrate her life while there was still time.

As we whistled, stamped, sang and waved our flags to say "Thank you", however, I think we knew in our private hearts that we were also saying "Goodbye." So on behalf of the people of Richmond Park, I extend my condolences to the royal family on their sad loss. May Her Majesty rest in peace and in the hearts and memories of her grateful nation, and may God save the King.

4.29 pm

Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con): It is a privilege to rise on behalf of my Sedgefield constituents, on an occasion that we never wanted to occur. I begin by giving my condolences to the Queen's family, for whom this is a personal event as much as it is one of state. Although no one can deny that living to 96 constitutes a long life, the demise of the Crown has still come as a shock to us all and will be most deeply felt by her family.

The Queen's sudden absence reminds us again of what a steady presence she was for the nation, and the love we have for her was fully demonstrated through the platinum jubilee celebrations. It did not matter which of my 40-odd towns and villages I went to, there was a street party going on. Hers was not the sort of presence one necessarily thought about on a daily basis, but since most of us cannot remember a time without it, it just seemed like a fact of life. Her reliable consistency was all the more impressive given that it was not a role she chose, and it must have been a daunting prospect at the start.

The values held and lived out by the Queen provide an example to everyone. She embodied virtues, such as respect, endurance and restraint, in as comprehensive a way as we have ever seen from anyone, anywhere. Nevertheless, no one is eternal, and we know that as a Christian she believed there was something more to look forward to.

In trying to work out what to say today, I found inspiration from one of my constituents. Yesterday, Stephen Atkinson, a local resident of Wingate, shared a poem that he wrote in a community group, and he has kindly given me permission to read it to the House. It is called "Our Lily".

"Our lily of the valley
Has shed her petals free
To drift upon the winds of time
In her own sweet Galilee
The Mother of our nation
So long its beating heart
Offers her earthly shell to rest
For her soul must now depart

So free it roams, through gilded vale
 And bonny lochs & moors
 Past stag & hare, & fragrant fayre
 To dusk's misty allures
 Where lies a smile, she knows so well
 Her waiting strength & stay
 Together, two souls reunite
 And dance the night away
 And here we are
 Elizabethans, is all we've ever been
 For 70 years you tried your best
 To live up to being Queen
 You'll always be our true foundation
 The soil of our scepter'd Isle
 A constant in our thoughts & hearts
 Great Britain's brightest smile
 I hope you sit upon Burmese
 With your Father by your side
 And in his long lost face you'll see
 Only love & endless pride"

On behalf of all my Sedgefield constituents, I thank our amazing Queen Elizabeth for her service and wish King Charles III the fortitude to deliver as his mother did. She is an amazing act to follow, but I have every confidence that he will deliver. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

4.32 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): It is with great sadness that I stand to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Over the past 48 hours, we have all reflected on her unparalleled role in our national life and have witnessed the tremendous affection and admiration in which she is held both at home and around the world. Yesterday evening we heard the words of our new King as he paid tribute to a dearly loved mother. On behalf of my constituents in Nottingham South, I extend my deepest sympathies to King Charles and all the royal family as they experience this very personal loss.

As so many colleagues have said, having reigned for a remarkable 70 years, the Queen has been a constant throughout our lives, and the milestones of her reign have left their mark in our own stories. I still have my silver jubilee envelope, but sadly not the coin, that we received in primary school. A photo of my youngest daughter as a toddler dressed up in gold crown and red velvet cloak for the golden jubilee hangs on the wall at home. Of course, I will never forget meeting the Queen on her diamond jubilee visit to Nottingham. Having waved to the crowd from the council house balcony, she confided that their cheers were even louder than outside Buckingham Palace.

The Queen has provided that much-needed point of stillness through some of the most turbulent times in our country's history, offering leadership, comfort and hope in the darkest hours, but she has also been a vital part of collective celebrations, including in our city of Nottingham. Her first official visit to Nottingham in 1949 as Princess Elizabeth was the highlight of the city's quinqucentenary celebrations. Half the city will have joyous memories of her presenting the FA cup to Nottingham Forest captain Jack Burkitt at Wembley in 1959, but

everyone will have cheered when she came to congratulate ice dancing gold medallists Torvill and Dean, following their triumph in the 1984 winter Olympics.

The Queen witnessed huge change in our city. On a visit in 1968 she toured the immense Raleigh factory in Radford. Thirty-one years later, she was back at that same spot. Bicycle production was all but over, and the Triumph Road site was being transformed into the University of Nottingham's Jubilee Campus, now attracting students from around the globe and researching cutting-edge technologies for the new century. Perhaps the city's most familiar manifestation of Her Majesty is the Queen's Medical Centre, which was the biggest purpose-built hospital in Europe when it was officially opened by the Queen in 1977. It was also over budget, controversial and delayed—features of infrastructure projects that I suspect were not unfamiliar to the Queen then and certainly not later.

The loss of our Queen has moved people around the world. On my behalf and that of the people of Nottingham South, and Nottinghamians everywhere, I say thank you for a life of exceptional public service, dignity, kindness and good humour. May she rest in peace. Long live the King.

4.35 pm

Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con): It is a great honour to speak on behalf of the people of Thurrock in my tribute to our already much-missed Queen Elizabeth II.

It has been moving and comforting to listen to the tributes here in Westminster and in the media. This is an amazing nation, and Queen Elizabeth epitomised the best of it. In what we have heard in the Chamber over the past two days, we have been reminded of just how important a position the monarchy has in our system of government, and how intricately involved she was in all our affairs of state. She applied herself to that work with such dedication. Her weekly audiences with the Prime Minister were not just a formality; they were an important part of how Prime Ministers are held to account on behalf of her subjects, and of course an opportunity for them to access her great wisdom. I very much enjoyed hearing the accounts of former Prime Ministers yesterday.

I had the good fortune of meeting the Queen when she visited Parliament 10 years ago. Unsurprisingly, I never tire of talking about Tilbury, as many Members know, and I am afraid that Queen Elizabeth also had that enjoyment. The one thing that everyone knows about Tilbury is that Queen Elizabeth I made her famous speech there. Well, Queen Elizabeth II also has an association with Tilbury.

In 1953 there was a massive tidal event in the North sea that led to many thousands of deaths in north Europe, including 300 in this country, and Tilbury town had to be evacuated. The Queen visited Tilbury and, again, it was one of those occasions when she did so well. At times of national tragedy she showed leadership, giving comfort and reassurance to those affected, and we will miss that. Over the years she has given such comfort to thousands upon thousands of people. In that respect, we have lost our anchor—the anchor that steadied the ship in rough seas—and the focus of great celebration.

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

We have already seen in the tone taken by King Charles III in his address to the nation that that leadership is passing into safe hands. We send King Charles our good wishes, our respect and our admiration as we mourn the loss of our much-loved Queen Elizabeth. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

4.38 pm

Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to convey and share the sadness of my Gordon constituents at the passing of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and to express our gratitude for her lifetime of service as our monarch and Head of State.

It has been an incredible privilege to listen to so many generous tributes in this place yesterday and today, and to hear so many personal stories about how Her Majesty's life and reign touched so many people. Many have already spoken, in this place and elsewhere, of the sense of permanence that Her Majesty brought to us. She was ever-present—a constant presence—in our public life. So many of us perhaps never realised the importance that she played in that backdrop of our lives and the presence that she had until that presence was no longer there.

It was a role that she carried out with diligence, grace and decorum, and with a deep sense of duty and obligation, for which we are all incredibly grateful. She was quite an extraordinary person, called to serve us in quite extraordinary times in quite an extraordinary role, serving as our monarch through a tumultuous period of technological, social and political advance.

She was the Head of State of many different countries and territories, and, as the winds of change blew throughout the past century, she saw many of them achieving self-government in their own right and saw many changes internally within the UK, with devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But throughout she demonstrated a surefootedness; a steadiness. She was a unifying presence, whatever change was happening around her, symbolising all that remained in common.

As has been said, she had a particular affinity with Scotland, particularly with Aberdeenshire in the north-east of Scotland, and especially with her beloved home, Balmoral castle. It was an area of Scotland where she was greatly loved and which she loved very much in return.

The loss of Her Majesty will be felt deeply. Even those who might be ambivalent to the institution of monarchy will nevertheless realise the enormity of the passing of someone who has served in that role so steadfastly, so diligently and with such commitment to her people.

As His Majesty King Charles has said:

"We mourn profoundly the passing of a cherished sovereign and a much-loved Mother. I know her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world."

In that, he speaks for each of us. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

4.41 pm

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): I rise on behalf of my constituents of the Calder Valley to thank Her Majesty the Queen for her lifetime of service to us, her peoples, and to her country, the Commonwealth

and the territories for all the very many reasons that have been mentioned here by colleagues over the past two days. I will not repeat them but will instead reflect on my own wonderful experiences of meeting Her Majesty.

I am what I would call a true working-class lad. We emigrated to Australia when I was five. I am the son of a boilermaker and a seamstress. We were £10 Poms who emigrated to the once great steel and shipbuilding towns and cities of Australia.

My first experience of seeing the Queen in real life was back in the late 1970s. I was just 15—Madam Deputy Speaker, I can see that you are aghast at that. I remember watching in awe as the Royal Yacht Britannia brought Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip to meet the then Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser. The amount of people who turned out to greet them was a magnificent sight. Never once then did I ever imagine that I would one day be Her Majesty's Vice-Chamberlain and be having one-to-one audiences with her at Buckingham Palace.

Let me briefly return to my working-class roots. When I left school, my mum was absolutely horrified that I went to work in an office. Such was the harshness of my background that she often asked why I did not get a proper job like my dad and my brother, who also had a trade—although, I would not change it for anything. This badgering from my mum has gone on my whole life. Even when I became an MP, in devilment she would say to me, "Just remind me what exactly is it that you do?"

A few years ago, when my mum was in her late 70s, she came back to the UK from Australia for a holiday. It was around the same time as the State Opening of Parliament. Not telling her a thing, I brought her here to London for a visit. I got her a seat in the House of Lords Gallery, overlooking the Queen—straight in front of the Queen. Then, for good measure, I got her a seat in the Special Gallery on the Floor of the House, courtesy of Mr Speaker's predecessor. No one has ever seen my mother speechless in her life, but I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that she was. I can also tell you that she has never once since said to me, "So tell me, what is it you actually do?"

That was the power of the respect Her Majesty gained from every generation of Britons, my good old mum included. I will take to my dying day the ease I felt with and the compassion and the love I had for my Queen—our Queen—as her Vice-Chamberlain. Her interest in and knowledge of the Calder Valley or any subject we discussed was flawless. May you rest in peace, Your Majesty. You have more than deserved and earned your peace. God save the Queen, and God save the King.

4.45 pm

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): It is an honour to rise today to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The whole country, the people of Barnsley, and millions across the Commonwealth and around the world are all mourning the loss of Britain's longest-reigning monarch. I express my sadness, and I give my condolences and those of the people of Barnsley East to our new King and to our royal family. Anyone who knows me knows I am a strong supporter of our constitutional monarchy—I am a proud royalist—but I have been struck by how both those who share my view

and those who hold the opposite one are unified in admiration for our late Queen's service, commitment and duty. Across the country, there is a profound sense of loss.

Queen Elizabeth II was part of that incredible generation of women—the most prominent of them my grandmother's generation—who lived through, served in and survived the second world war, at a time when attitudes to women were very different. She perfectly understood the role of a constitutional monarch, public service and duty. She knew it was not her job to solve the problems of the day—that falls to us in this place—but she often spoke to our nation at times of peril, danger and division, delivering a message of comfort and unity. For me, most notably, in the wake of the horrific 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, she said:

"Grief is the price we pay for love."

We draw on that sentiment today at a time of profound national sadness and mourning.

Members across the House have rightly spoken of how our Queen Elizabeth has been a constant in our lives in an ever-changing world—in difficult times and in happier ones. In 1977, she had been on the throne for a quarter of a century when she visited Barnsley as part of her silver jubilee celebrations. Our town was built on coal, and when she visited in 1954 she was given a commemorative piece to mark the occasion. I know the people of Barnsley celebrated then as they mourn today.

The late Queen had a unique ability to unite us all, and today we are united in our grief. As the poet laureate, Yorkshireman Simon Armitage, wrote in his collection "Queenhood" to mark the platinum jubilee:

"For generations we will not know such majesty."

As our Elizabethan age closes, those words ring true. As we mourn her loss, as we celebrate her life and as we thank her for her service, we say rest in peace, and we say God save the King.

4.48 pm

Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con): I am deeply saddened, as I know the entire country is, at the passing of our Queen. I never actually had the honour of meeting her. Like most people, I saw her on TV and the occasional glimpse through her car window. Finally, I thought I had my chance when I became an MP and I could attend the opening of Parliament. I was first to put in a prayer card and first to the Chamber, and I was sitting in my place eagerly waiting for the proceedings to begin, only to realise as they took place that first in the Chamber means last out. There I was watching those on the Front Bench file out while I was trapped behind several annoying Members of Parliament who would not get out of the way. In fairness, it is not because they would not, but because they could not, and they had probably made the same error as me. Sadly, I never did get that glimpse. However, something I did get was a memory that came flooding back to me from my younger days. It was a message that said:

"He who is first will be last, and he who is last will be first."

Like our Queen, I am a Christian, so while I have this moment, I want to let the House know of a recent sermon I heard—it is very short. The pastor spoke of being able to tune a piano from another piano, and then another piano, and so on. It can be done many times, but each time the next piano becomes a little more out

of tune than the previous one. What should happen is that each piano should be tuned to the same tuning fork. That way they will all be perfectly in tune. His analogy was that we should all use Christ as our tuning fork, not the world. That way, each of us could try to live like Christ. I believe that our Queen, through her faith, did just that and, by doing so, showed the rest of the world what a life in Christ looked like—a life of faith, hope and, most importantly, love.

Since I became an MP, I have spoken much of the importance of good role models. I cannot think of a finer example than our late Queen. If we all seek to serve as our Queen did, putting God, duty and others first, then this world we all share will be a much better place for it, remembering always that he who puts himself first will be last, but he who puts himself last will be first. Our Queen always put herself last and others first.

I finish by thanking our Queen on behalf of us all in Don Valley for her 70 years of incredible service. On behalf of my constituents again, I would like to pass on our sincere condolences to the entire royal family. God save the King; long may you reign.

4.51 pm

Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Only three months ago, the country was celebrating the late Queen's platinum jubilee, and we gathered in this place to pay tribute to Her Majesty for her years of dedicated service to our country and the Commonwealth. We could not have imagined that we would be gathered here today to pay our tributes upon her death. But amidst the sadness, it is surely comforting to remember that, in what were to be Her Majesty's last days and months, she enjoyed a massive outpouring of admiration, affection and gratitude, witnessed at the many events across the country to celebrate her 70 glorious years on the throne.

We enjoyed many jubilee celebrations in my constituency of North Tyneside, where we have always given the Queen and the royal family the warmest of welcomes, whenever they visit. The earliest visit I can recall was in 1967, when the Queen came to open the then new Tyne tunnel. It was a school day, but one boy in my class lived near the tunnel and was given half a day off to join his family in the crowds welcoming the Queen. I was in awe of that and a bit envious, I must admit. Little did I know that, 45 years later, I would be welcoming the Queen as a new MP, joining the crowds, including schoolchildren, when the Queen made her last visit to North Tyneside to open Tyne tunnel 2.

I, my family and all my constituents have a great fondness for the Queen. During her reign she gave us so much—much hope, much pride, much inspiration and much joy. On behalf of my constituents, I send my heartfelt condolences to King Charles and all the royal family as they mourn such a personal loss. May our gracious Queen rest in peace and may God save the King.

4.53 pm

Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con): It is a privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents. I will focus my remarks on Her Majesty's role in marking the milestones of Guildford throughout her reign.

[Angela Richardson]

Queen Elizabeth first visited Guildford in 1957 with His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to mark the 700th anniversary of the town's charter. She was presented with a traditional gift for royal visitors to Guildford, on the balcony of the Guildhall, which was a plum cake—although I am not sure whether she partook of it, given her fondness for chocolate cake instead. The Queen then visited the half-completed Guildford cathedral, signing, with the Duke, two bricks to be incorporated into the structure. There they remain, along with many thousands of others signed by Guildfordians. She will be indelibly with us in Guildford for centuries to come.

Four years later, in May 1961, Her Majesty attended the consecration of the cathedral. It was the first new Anglican cathedral to be built in 500 years. In 2011, she returned with the Duke to mark 50 years since that consecration.

During the second world war, Her Majesty served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in and around the Surrey area, and retained her connection to the successor Women's Royal Army Corps during her reign. In 1964, she opened the WRAC barracks in Guildford, which, I am glad to say, cast off its nickname of the "powder puff barracks" to become the Queen Elizabeth barracks; today, this is the community of Queen Elizabeth Park. Her Majesty returned 15 years later, in 1979, to mark 60 years of the WRAC Association, unveiling a plaque to mark the occasion. In February 1981, she opened the Royal Surrey County Hospital and spent time touring the new facility, speaking to staff and patients. She returned in 1997 with the Duke to open the amazing St Luke's cancer centre.

Her Majesty was also a visitor to the University of Surrey, attending the service of thanksgiving for the university's silver jubilee in 1992 and opening the Surrey Space Centre in 1998. In October 2015, the Queen returned to open a school of veterinary medicine with the Duke of Edinburgh, when, as well as touring the facility, she spoke to Professor Noel Fitzpatrick about prosthetic limb use for dogs.

Her Majesty was a monarch who retained an interest in the lives of her people. She returned to cathedrals she had inaugurated, hospitals she had opened, organisations of which she had been a part and universities where the future scientists, artists and leaders of her nation were being educated. That interest and warmth drew so much affection from her people. Her investment in this country and its people was total and unwavering. It was the greater part of her and she an irreplaceable part of us all. May she rest in peace and may God save the King.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Before I leave the Chair, Mr Speaker has asked me to remind Members and staff that there is a service tomorrow at 6 pm at St Margaret's church for the parliamentary community to remember Her late Majesty the Queen. Those wishing to attend should please contact Mr Speaker's Office.

May I also say that it has been an honour to hear so many moving tributes to Queen Elizabeth II? I know that I speak for my constituents of Doncaster Central when I say thank you to our late Queen for her lifetime of public service. May she rest in peace, and long live the King. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]

4.57 pm

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a real honour to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the life and achievement of Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of the Alliance party and my constituents in North Down. Hers was a life of duty and service. She was a leader and a healer. Indeed, she was an exemplar of what a constitutional monarch should be. She was loved and respected not just across the UK, but around the world. It was interesting to note that whenever the UK hosted huge international gatherings it was clear that other Heads of State and other Heads of Government looked up to the Queen greatly.

At times of tragedy, the Queen was our comforter-in-chief. That was especially so in responding to the pain and suffering experienced in Northern Ireland, and of course the troubles affected her so deeply and personally as well. In return, she honoured the service and sacrifice of the Royal Ulster Constabulary by awarding the George Cross, and recognised the role and service of the Royal Irish Regiment in providing it with the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.

The Queen did so much to promote reconciliation in Ireland and to improve Anglo-Irish relations. That was encapsulated in the reciprocal visits that were made; first, the visit by her to Ireland in 2011, with that memorable state dinner, and then the return state visit of the Irish President Michael D. Higgins to the UK in 2014. Sadly, that reception in Windsor Castle was the last time I had the opportunity to meet her. She paid some memorable visits to North Down in 1961 and 2009, and there is an iconic image of her in Bangor harbour on that 1961 visit. We were enormously grateful that Bangor was awarded city status as part of this year's platinum jubilee civic honours. Indeed, given what has now happened, that was particularly poignant.

I have confidence in the leadership of the new King. Indeed, he has served the longest apprenticeship in history. I particularly appreciate what he has done for the environment and for young people, notably through the Prince's Trust. I wish him every success as he sets off at this most difficult time. May the Queen rest in peace, and God save the King.

5 pm

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): So many people here in the UK, in my city of Stoke-on-Trent and across the Commonwealth will be feeling a great deal of loss and sadness, which is hard to express. The Queen visited Stoke-on-Trent on a number of occasions, first in 1949. People across our city will be mourning her loss. Our heartfelt condolences go out to His Majesty and the King and the entire royal family.

Few alive today can remember a time without Her Majesty the Queen; for many it will be difficult to imagine a life without her. Over 70 years of dutiful service, her constancy and strength have guided our great nation and 14 other Commonwealth realms, each of which she cared for very deeply. Over that time, the world has changed almost unrecognisably, but she was always there to offer stability to us in times of great change, and reassurance in times of crisis. Even in these final few years of her life, despite declining health and the loss of her deeply beloved Philip, at the age of 96 she continued to perform her important duties as our Head of State.

Just as His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh was Her Majesty's strength and stay, she was our strength and stay. That is how she will be remembered. She was our longest-reigning monarch and probably our greatest, if not one of the greatest leaders that the world has ever seen. One of her greatest abilities was to remain above politics, bridging divides, whether political, across communities or generational.

Along with thousands of others who had the chance, I was lucky enough with my wife Laura to attend one of the Queen's numerous garden parties at Buckingham Palace a few years ago. It was a day that I will never forget, I am sure along with all those who had that chance. Many never had the chance to meet the Queen directly, but there is still a great feeling of loss and sadness. She was a significant part of our lives. She was loved by all of us. That was clear to see in the great deal of affection and respect shown to Her Majesty in the huge outpouring of support earlier this year during the platinum jubilee celebrations, just as we now see the massive expression of sympathy around the world.

We will now join in mourning her loss and supporting our new King. I know from meeting him previously on a number of occasions that, following his mother's example, he will do all that he can to support our great nation, and that he has a great deal of affection for my city of Stoke-on-Trent.

Let us never forget our Elizabeth the Great. She is now at peace, reunited with her beloved Philip. Her achievements and memory will live on. God save the King.

5.3 pm

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak in tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in the north of Nottingham. We loved her dearly, and are united in grief today. The values that she exemplified—duty, love of country, commitment to fellow persons—are ones we strive to live by every day in our part of the world.

I have two short memories that I wish to share on behalf of our community. First, for the diamond jubilee in 2012, the Queen visited Vernon Park in Basford in my constituency. I was the local councillor then and, as I left my home to walk to that event, it felt that like for every door we passed, someone else joined the throng walking down to the park. When we got there, we were this mass of humanity, just so thrilled to be able to show off our community to the Queen, and to sing, to dance and play sport. Virtually everyone in our community has a story about that day. That was the sort of connection the Queen made with British people up and down this country. The markers we have to commemorate that day, we will have forever.

That was echoed 10 years later, on the occasion of the platinum jubilee. We had more than two dozen events across our constituency, all locally organised, spontaneous demonstrations of love of Queen and country, and the desire to get back together after so long apart. That is what our Queen did, didn't she? She brought us together. She united us. My community is united in mourning today, but also united when we say God Save the King.

5.4 pm

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): It is with immense sadness that I rise to pay tribute to, and give thanks for the life of, our late Queen Elizabeth. On behalf of my

family and the people of Cheadle, I want to send heartfelt condolences to King Charles and the entire family, who remain in our thoughts and prayers at this sad time.

The Queen has been hailed as a golden thread which binds countries and people together, and her reign has been the single thread of continuity throughout my life and the lives of many people across the world who have known no other sovereign. I did not get to meet her, but the wonderful personal and moving tributes following the death of our beloved Queen allow us to glimpse the human face behind the monarch. Many stories relate the meetings and audiences that some privileged people were allowed to attend, while others describe those brilliant occasions when a visit would lead to a chance encounter with a few warm words and gestures forever imprinted on memories, to be retold to children and grandchildren.

For our parents and grandparents and those who lived through or fought in the second world war, it was the photos of the young princess in her ATS uniform that showed her steadfast spirit and her solidarity with them, and were an example of her desire to serve, which later came to exemplify her reign. Indeed, the appetite to see the Queen, not just in the newspapers but live on screen, set off a surge in sales of televisions, with millions of people gathering to watch the Coronation in 1953 on newly purchased, or rented, grainy black and white screens. Since then, her life of public duty—and her personal family life too—has been streamed directly into people's front rooms, and that personal connection remained throughout her decades of service. We may not have met Her Majesty personally, but we knew her and welcomed her into our hearts and into our homes, especially at Christmas when our families gathered together and we heard her Christmas message, in which she was always perceptive, compassionate, guiding, sharing her wisdom and her love of God. As we have heard, on her 21st birthday she declared that her

"whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted"

to our service. Her Majesty was happily blessed with a long life, and as a nation we have been blessed by her service.

We are experiencing a profound sense of loss as we mourn our Queen. We will miss having her in our lives. But the golden thread of duty, love and service that knits our communities and nations together will pass unbroken to her heir, King Charles III. God bless her Majesty. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

5.7 pm

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words today. It is a genuine honour for me to speak in this important debate on behalf of the people of Newport West to pay tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II. I want to echo the sentiments expressed by Members on both sides of the House; I was inspired by—and enjoyed listening to—their elegant, witty words and the stories about the Queen that they have shared with us, and I am very grateful to them.

By any measure, Her late Majesty was one of a kind. She led, she served, she cared, she inspired, she comforted, and she challenged. Queen Elizabeth will be irreplaceable, and we were lucky to have her. Hers was a life well lived. From travelling to all parts of our world to serving as our most long-standing Head of State, she made history,

[Ruth Jones]

and she was our present for so long. It does not matter whether you are a royalist or a republican, Madam Deputy Speaker: we can all recognise the Queen's dedication, integrity, compassion and sense of humour, and acknowledge her lifetime of extraordinary service to our country, of commitment to the people of Wales, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and her calm, strong and stable leadership.

I have heard many stories about the visits that the Queen paid to our area in south Wales and to my Newport West constituency, such as her visit to St Woolos' Cathedral in Stow Hill. At the official openings of the Assembly of Wales, now the Senedd, the former Assembly Member for Newport West and Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler, welcomed the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to Cardiff Bay, the home of the Welsh national Parliament.

Today I want to give voice to the many people who live, learn and work in Newport West, who mourn Her late Majesty's passing and who, through me as their Member of Parliament, extend their condolences to the King and the royal family. In particular, I want to mention a message that I received from Mubarak Ali on behalf of the Islamic Society for Wales:

"At this sad time we all share our grief and tears with members of the royal family. Queen Elizabeth will be greatly missed. Rest in peace in heaven, your majesty. Thank you for your love and dedication for our country and the world."

In 1944, the then Princess Elizabeth made her first visit to Newport. My 87-year-old mum and others of her age remember that visit and the boost that it provided during the difficult war years. In 2002, to celebrate the Queen's golden jubilee, Newport was granted city status. It was a moment of immense pride for our city. Again, Her late Majesty was there to celebrate with us, and I must admit that I was very proud that my four-year-old daughter Elinor was one of the first to give Her late Majesty a posy of flowers as she arrived in the city centre—#proudmum.

We politicians come and go, but Her late Majesty endured and was a constant for all of us. As we move into a new world, with a new monarch and a gaping hole in our national life, we give thanks for the life of Queen Elizabeth II, mourn her loss and send our prayers, condolences and love to the royal family, the country, the Commonwealth and the world that she has left behind. May she rest in peace.

5.11 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): It is a privilege to pay tribute on behalf of my Congleton constituents to Queen Elizabeth II's life of dutiful service. How did the holder of such high office, with the rightful adulation of millions across the world, sustain for more than seven decades a life of such dedicated and selfless service to others? I suggest that it was because she recognised, in a very real and personal way, that there is a higher authority even than her own—an authority by whom she was called to her role and to whom ultimately she was accountable. She said:

"To many of us our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life."

The Queen's example of servant leadership is unparalleled in our time. In many of her Christmas broadcasts, she spoke publicly, clearly and baldly of her Christian faith,

and she was loved and respected for it by many. Christmas broadcasts are the one occasion for which a monarch can write their own speech and convey their innermost thoughts; she spoke of the importance of family and small acts of kindness. In 2011, she said:

"God sent into the world a unique person—neither a philosopher nor a general (important though they are)—but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities."

Although the Queen had a deep and enduring Christian faith, she was mindful of the importance of freedom of religion or belief for all. Indeed, she was ahead of many. Speaking in 2020 about the good Samaritans, she said:

"The man who is robbed and left at the roadside is saved by someone who did not share his religion or culture. This wonderful story of kindness is still as relevant today. Good Samaritans have emerged across society showing care and respect for all, regardless of gender, race or background, reminding us that each one of us is special and equal in the eyes of God."

At Lambeth Palace in 2012, she said that the Church of England

"has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country...an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely."

In 2014, she spoke about how we need to respect freedom of religion or belief for all faiths, a view shared by her son and successor King Charles III. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call Mr Jim Shannon.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I just want to make it clear that, just because the hon. Gentleman is on his feet, it does not mean we have come to the end of the sitting. [Laughter.] This is unusual, and I would not like the Chamber to empty unnecessarily.

5.14 pm

Jim Shannon: I could tell from the gasps from around the Chamber that people were thinking "It's all over," but no, it is not.

I am very pleased to have the honour of speaking and expressing my thanks to God above for the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituency of Strangford and my own family. I well remember my Mum and Dad going to a garden party in 2012. They were pleased to be there—they are real royalists—and to enjoy the occasion with the Queen and Prince Philip. They also got their 60th wedding anniversary card especially for them, of course, which exalts the occasion. I am pleased that we have a couple of occasions to remember as a family.

The page before me lay blank for a long time, which may shock many hon. Members, who know that I am never short of a speech, or perhaps two, but the truth is that I did not know what to say of my and our unparalleled Queen—how to express the depth of sorrow and loss we feel, and how to convey my thanks to almighty God for giving me the privilege of serving my and our Queen in uniform and in this House, and my constituents the security of living under the greatest reign in history. I spoke of my admiration for this godly example of

service and loyalty, faithfulness, wit, humour and grace during the jubilee, and even then I was emotional in fear of the day that we never wanted to come. That day came, and with it a depth of sorrow and loss that far outweighed what I thought possible, yet with it also comes a sense of peace, because I know that our Queen, this lady who gave and excelled up until a matter of hours before her death, is now with her saviour whom she loved, in Heaven.

In her whole life, the Queen gave her royal seal to only one book about herself, “The Servant Queen and the King she serves”. That says it all to me. A woman of history, royal blood and impeccable birth, she never bowed the knee to any power on this Earth, yet she willingly bowed to Jesus and served him faithfully. In giving Jesus her heart, she was able to dedicate her all to us—the ultimate example of the best of British, the best of the greatest generation, the best of us all in this House and this country. Prophetically, her name Elizabeth Alexandra Mary means “God is my oath, a helper and defender of mankind, and beloved.” Queen Elizabeth radiated her oath of service, made to her God that she loved. She has helped and defended this Union, Commonwealth and our faith. And she was certainly most beloved—an inspiration to so many who fought in her name, who gave up their lives in defence of her and all she stood for.

“For Queen and country” was an easy oath to make, and one I held dear, as have my constituents. Now, in deference to the late Queen and in hope for the foundation that she has laid in her family, with my whole heart, I say long live King Charles III. God save the King.

5.17 pm

Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con): It is with great sadness and some pride that I rise today to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my family and my constituents across North Warwickshire and Bedworth, and to send our condolences to the royal family.

Thursday was the day we always knew, at the back of our mind, was inevitable. Most wished it would never arrive, but I think that few of us considered the impact its coming would have on us all. I am sure I was not alone in waking on Friday morning with the most profound sense of grief that I really could not rationalise. Like many people, I had not met the late Queen, but I still felt I knew her. She had been part of our daily life forever, not just here in Parliament. Her image was seen nearly everywhere. She was in our wallets, on our letters, in our shops and on our walls. We shared our troubled times with her and we shared our successes; we even shared our Christmas day together. She loved our country and it loved her. That was never more evident than during the recent jubilee celebrations across our constituencies.

Although the late Queen Elizabeth II was of royal blood, she had an amazing ability to connect with people, and we felt that she was “one of us”. But I think what is most incredible is that, unlike us here in this place, she did not ask for her role—to be our Head of State. Rather, it was imposed on her, which makes it even more incredible that she kept the promise that she made as a 21-year-old princess right up until the very end of her days: that she would devote her life to service. For that, we should be eternally grateful.

No other person has had such a profound impact on so many lives over such a long period of time. The word “icon” is often bandied around to describe various people, but never has it been more appropriate than for our Queen Elizabeth. She defined our nation and represented it unfailingly for 70 years. It now seems very strange to be contemplating a future without Her late Majesty in it. In an uncertain and dynamic world, she was a reassuring constant, and her death is not just a tragedy for the royal family, but a dreadful loss for us all. However, we should remember that it was a life lived with true purpose, and on behalf of my constituents and myself, I would like to say, “Thank you, Your Majesty, for your dedication and service to our country. May you now rest in peace, and God save the King.”

5.20 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): Yesterday morning, I bumped into Helen, a constituent. She was visibly upset. It was an ungodly hour—quarter to 7—and she was walking in early for work at a local butcher’s shop in the heart of Royal Leamington Spa, a shop so well regarded that it holds a warrant to supply the royal household. She told me how she had dreaded the coming of this day. Like so many of us, she was shocked by the news. An hour later, as I stood in the queue for a train ticket, the guy in front of me, in jeans and a torn black leather jacket, confided that he was going to Buckingham Palace because he needed to be there. Those are two simple vignettes that, I am sure, were replayed up and down our country.

For a person of such slight figure, the Queen seemed to stand above Presidents, Prime Ministers, and other Heads of State. It was not simply her longevity or her manner; there was invariably a genuine respect for her, for her experience and her wise counsel. Her virtues were many: dedication, diligence, integrity, respect, loyalty, humility, compassion and constancy, for at times of turmoil, she provided calm. At times of national self-doubt, she reassured us, throughout her reign and even before—in wartime, after various bombings and the Aberfan disaster, and then during the pandemic, when she proposed hope and that we would meet again. Her state visit to Ireland in 2011, where she made one of her most significant speeches, was the first visit there by any British monarch for 100 years. She also celebrated with us in moments of national joy, such as VE Day—imagine the liberation she felt at being able to be out on the streets with the people—that magic moment of presenting Bobby Moore with the Jules Rimet trophy, and dropping by for the Olympics in 2012. She was the woman for all seasons.

Warwick and Leamington was blessed by her visits on three occasions. The first was in 1988, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s granting of the royal warrant to Leamington. In 1996, she visited Lord Leycester Hospital and Warwick castle, and she made her final visit in 2011, to open the Warwickshire Justice Centre. I am not sure whether she had time to drop by the butcher’s, but hopefully King Charles III will make time in the coming years.

On behalf of the good people of Warwick, Leamington, Whitnash and villages, I pay tribute and offer our thanks for the life of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for her dignity and commitment to our service, and express our sincere condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and all the family. Her late Majesty the Queen was not given to sentimentality. She would have

[Matt Western]

wanted us to look forwards, and perhaps she would have put it this way: “The firm has a new boss.” May our late Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

5.24 pm

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con): I place on record our gratitude to the Speaker for allowing Ministers to participate in this debate from the Back Benches. From having listened to the many contributions made yesterday and today, it is really striking how many of our constituencies had multiple visits from Her late Majesty the Queen over her seven decades of service. I was in my constituency of Bournemouth West yesterday, talking to local people who remember her last visit to Pier Approach in Bournemouth. She had views about all our constituencies, and so did her late husband. I was introduced to the Duke of Edinburgh in 2013, at a reception at Buckingham Palace. He asked me, “Where are you from?” I said, “Bournemouth, Sir.” He said, “Hmm, Bournemouth. Full of old people.” I said, “Yes, Sir, many of them a good deal younger than you.” For a split second, I thought I had made a serious mistake, but he burst out laughing and called the Queen over to tell her what I had said. She said, “Well, Philip, that isn’t hard, is it?”

Our late Queen embodied our national values. When we go abroad, we find that people recognise the English language, our legal system, and our arts and culture; and because of her long, long reign, they very much identify the United Kingdom of today with the late Queen. I was constantly struck by her reach. In May, in Washington, I attended a RuPaul’s Drag Race British Invasion tour concert, where I met a young person called Josh Cargill. Josh is more commonly known by his stage name, Blu Hydrangea, and he is one of Northern Ireland’s pre-eminent drag queens. My conversation with Josh took a novel turn when he told me of his connection with Her late Majesty the Queen: she opened his primary school, Downshire Primary School in Royal Hillsborough, when he was a pupil there.

I went to Downshire Primary in May to launch the Northern Ireland Office platinum jubilee rug competition. We asked the young people of Northern Ireland to design a rug on the theme, “A postcard from Northern Ireland”, to present to the royal household as a token of the young people’s appreciation for the Queen’s service. It was an enduring sign of the Queen’s role at the forefront of reconciliation; there was also the famous visit to Ireland in 2011, and the many conciliatory gestures she made in Northern Ireland to aid peace and reconciliation. The project was supported by over 2,000 entries from primary schools of every type—Catholic, Protestant and integrated—from every one of Northern Ireland’s six counties. It was a great delight that we were able to finish that project, and the rug designed by the young lady who won the competition, Emily, was made by that great royal warrant-holding, exporting company, Ulster Carpets, in Northern Ireland.

The Queen was one of us. That is why she was held in such deep and enduring affection. Over the four days of the magnificent jubilee weekend, we were able to show Her late Majesty how deeply we cared for her, and how grateful we were for her long service. Our new Prince of Wales has reminded us of his grandmother’s words:

“Grief is the price we pay for love.”

Our country can be very proud of those four days; through them, there is no doubt that Her late Majesty the Queen died secure in the knowledge of our love and affection. Looking back, that was the moment that we brought the Queen close to us one last time, and in a very real sense also let her go. May our wonderful servant and sovereign rest in peace, and may God save the King.

5.28 pm

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): It is an honour to speak today, and to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II personally and on behalf of my constituents in Reading East. Queen Elizabeth was our longest serving and arguably greatest ever monarch. She was deeply loved and admired, and we all feel a profound sense of personal sadness and a great loss at this difficult time. Like many of us, I am still trying to take in the events of the last few days. We all knew that this day would come, but part of us somehow felt that the Queen would always be there, because she had been there throughout our lives. She was truly a constant for all of us in a rapidly changing world. Her reign covered a period of unprecedented social and technological change, yet she also linked the modern world to the wartime generation.

The Queen’s life was defined by service. As a young woman, during the war, she made a solemn vow to serve her people as long as she lived. She kept that promise over more than 70 years as our Queen, during a lifetime dedicated to our country and to the Commonwealth. She led by example in good times and in bad, through her kindness, humility, quiet determination and her dry sense of humour. Her Majesty was both our head of state and the head of the Commonwealth, but we also felt a deep personal connection to her, one which is difficult to put into words. She was a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother, and we sometimes felt that she was like a grandmother to all of us in this country and in the Commonwealth.

Locally, there is a deep and abiding love and respect for the late Queen across our community. She visited several times during her long reign, including opening the new Reading station in 2014. I can vividly remember the sheer joy and enthusiasm of children, families and older people at a local platinum jubilee street party that I attended—people of all backgrounds, all faiths and none, celebrating their Queen. It was a more than fitting tribute to Her late Majesty and the Elizabethan age.

May the Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

5.30 pm

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): It really is an honour to speak on behalf of my constituents in Hendon. The Queen was no stranger to my constituency, which she visited on more than 12 occasions. In 1945, three Dakota aircraft, bearing Their Majesties the King, the Queen and Princess Elizabeth, and a press entourage, left RAF Hendon for the first royal visit by air, to Northern Ireland. That was followed by a visit by a pregnant Her Majesty to the drapers’ cottages in Mill Hill. She subsequently planted a cedar tree to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Mill Hill School. She formally opened the RAF museum in Hendon. She opened the Peel Centre at Hendon Police College. She performed a royal review at the Hendon Police College as part of her silver jubilee.

In 1982, as colonel-in-chief of the Royal Engineers, the Queen spent the day at Inglis barracks, visiting the Home Postal Depot, Royal Engineers, and unveiling a commemorative statue called “Letter from Home” to mark the centenary of the British Forces Post Office. In 1985, she opened the Central Public Health Laboratory in Colindale. In 2001, she laid a wreath to inaugurate the Metropolitan Police memorial in the grounds of the Metropolitan Police training establishment in Colindale.

The golden jubilee north London celebration was held at Cophall Stadium, Mill Hill. I was pleased to be one of the newly elected councillors who was able to be there to meet the Queen in person. In 2005, she visited the emergency call centre at Hendon Police College after the tsunami disaster. In 2012, in her final visit, the north London diamond jubilee procession of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh came through Edgware.

In my constituency, the regard in which Her Majesty is held by ethnic minorities is second to none. As we have already heard today, the people of Hendon hold the Queen in high regard, and it still impresses me that, at the end of every sabbath service, without exception, my constituents in synagogue say a prayer for the Queen and the royal family. They have been saying that prayer since 1952 when Her Majesty ascended to the throne. There have been more than a dozen versions to reflect changes through marriages and deaths, but the one constant in the prayer throughout the last 70 years has been our sovereign lady, Queen Elizabeth.

I have often said that none of us in politics is very important, and it is my belief that there is only one person who is important in politics, and that is the monarch. As we have seen in the last few days, Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament come and go but the monarch remains. Each and every one of us have made sacrifices to be here in this place, but the Queen made even greater sacrifices for over 70 years. That commitment to public service is unimaginable to us.

A friend left a message on her Facebook page that really summed up what I would say to the Queen right now, if I had the opportunity:

“Good night, God bless, and thank you for everything.”

Long live the King.

5.34 pm

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): That so many hon. Members have waited patiently over the past two days to pay our tributes to the passing of Her Majesty the Queen is testament to the real depth of feeling—the sorrow and the love—that we all want to convey on behalf of our constituents at this moment of huge loss. On behalf of all our communities in Newport East, I too wish to honour her memory; to put on the record our deepest condolences on the passing of an extraordinary monarch who faithfully served our country all her long life, and who has just always been there in challenging and ever-changing times; and to send our love to her family as they grieve.

As Princess Elizabeth, Her Majesty’s first official visit outside of London was to Newport, where, at the time, hundreds of men and women were working at the Royal Ordnance factory on Corporation Road, producing munitions for the invasion of occupied Europe. It is fair to say that that generation felt a special kinship with the Queen, not least because of her dedication to support the war effort herself as a serving member of the

Auxiliary Territorial Service. That service initiated a lifelong bond with our armed forces community, which, as other Members have said, is clearly something that she took great personal pride in throughout her life. That was much appreciated in Newport East. As Queen, she opened Llanwern steelworks, which still produces world-class steel today. She returned to officially open the Severn bridge and granted Newport city status—all transformative for our part of south-east Wales, and the Queen was at the heart of it.

One constituent summed it up for many, writing that “the loss of our Queen feels personal for our family”.

That sentiment is echoed by many constituents. For the Morses, who sadly passed on recently, meeting the Queen at a garden party was one of the highlights of their lives. A constituent shared a photo of their daughter Heather presenting a bouquet to the Queen. Maisy, who was presented to the Queen at the opening of the Senedd, felt, as she put it,

“her astounding presence and warmth”.

But whether you had met her or not mattered little: she was a constant presence and an emblem of 70 years of monumental change, love and loss in the lives of millions.

In the Prayers that begin each day in this Chamber, we focus on service above self—something that is easier to say than do. The Queen’s seven decades of public service exemplified that commitment—not the grandeur of her status, not the ceremony that surrounded her, but her embodiment of the values, the integrity, the history and the standards we all seek to live by and to have at the heart of British life. She demonstrated those values every day, yet she was seen not as remote and distant but as personal and human while still unique. Her last service has been to unite the country in mourning her loss. Our task now is to integrate her unifying legacy of service and integrity into all we do. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

5.37 pm

Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to place on the record, on behalf of my constituents, the huge appreciation that we all share for the life and service of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I also place on the record my condolences to His Majesty the King, and to all the royal family, about which much has been said already.

I feel humbled to stand here today as the Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster, a constituency with such rich links to Her Majesty’s reign—from her birth in Bruton Street in Mayfair to her funeral, which will be held in Westminster Abbey.

The two Cities were the vessel from which Her Majesty ruled, advised and steered our nation. Indeed, the two Cities are home to so many of the physical monuments of her reign. There is Buckingham Palace, of course, which has become the epicentre of the nation’s grief in the past two days. There is the Mall, the national stage for the pomp and ceremony that binds us to our past and our future. It has seen coronation processions, the daily routes of the Queen’s Guard, and the celebrations we saw back in the summer for the Queen’s platinum jubilee.

There are St James’s Palace and Clarence House, where the Queen spent much of her youth and raised her young family before she took the throne in 1952. And of course there are Westminster Abbey and St Paul’s

[Nickie Aiken]

cathedral. The former was so pivotal in her life, from her marriage to her coronation and now, sadly, her funeral. The latter played an integral role in marking her extraordinary reign, especially with the services celebrating her silver, gold and diamond jubilees and, only a few months ago, that celebrating her platinum jubilee, which I was honoured to attend. Last night, of course, the cathedral led the first of many services of thanksgiving to our late Sovereign.

When thinking about the Queen, I think of her role as the Head of State. For me, one of her everlasting legacies will be how she brought together the Commonwealth nations, growing their union from eight countries to 56 collective nations brought together under her stewardship. I often think how unappreciated Her Majesty's skills in diplomacy were. Just think about what our world looked like at the beginning of her reign, and what it is now. By sheer force of character, she healed a deeply fractured world post empire. She fostered a family of nations that bore no resemblance to the empire of the past and that was instead built on the values of friendship, freedom and peace. Looking at the Cities of London and Westminster, I see the epitome of the Commonwealth's legacy in both people and values, and we have the late Queen to thank for that. Like everyone else, when we heard the news of the late Queen's passing, it hit us personally, because she had been such a constant throughout our lives and we have all shared in the celebrations of her life.

One of my first memories of the Queen was the silver jubilee in 1977. As a Brownie, I received the 25p silver coin, and I recall the excitement of receiving that gift. For the diamond jubilee, my own daughter Georgia, then aged eight, was invited to present Her Majesty with a bouquet of flowers when she visited Fortnum and Mason in Piccadilly on the first stop of her jubilee tour.

For me, the Queen had a unique ability to tap into the hearts of every single person, and a lot of that was because of her characteristic sense of humour and sense of fun, which cut through with people of all ages and backgrounds. In fact, I remember sitting on the sofa with my son Harry as we watched the opening of the Olympics in 2012, and the joy on his face at seeing the Queen jump out of a helicopter with James Bond. I think to this day he still believes that it happened. I felt a similar feeling for the new generation of children as we saw her share tea with Paddington Bear this summer. It is comforting to me that she placed such a premium on our future generations—especially now, as we look to the next generation of the Crown in King Charles III. Indeed, I was moved to see the new King and the Queen Consort walk into Buckingham Palace as monarch and Queen for the first time.

As a new chapter in our history begins, the Cities of London and Westminster now prepare for another landmark in the Crown's passage through history: the funeral of Elizabeth the Great and the coronation of King Charles III in Westminster Abbey. For that, I say God bless the Queen and long live the King.

5.42 pm

John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): I keep thinking of that final photo of the Queen, taken only this week as she welcomed the Prime Minister to

Balmoral. It is the most poignant of images. She is standing by an open fire with a familiar no-nonsense hairdo, and she is wearing a comfortable kilt. But a closer examination of the familiar figure reveals that she is struggling to lift her head, her right hand looks badly bruised and she is leaning heavily on a stick. I suspect that she must have been feeling tired and sore, but she is wearing make-up and smiling a warm welcome. How brave that was and how dutiful. We look at the photo with affection and respect because it is Queen Elizabeth but also because, for so many of us, her bravery so close to the moment of her passing will remind us of all those we have loved and lost—all the mothers and grandmothers we have known and admired for their quiet, anonymous courage.

Few of us knew the Queen personally, but we all felt somehow that we did, and there are recurring themes as the tributes pour in. She was a woman of great religious faith who did not fear death. She was capable of many quiet acts of sensitivity and compassion away from the public eye. She could be very funny, with a dry wit and a mischievous talent for mimicry, and she did not like folk who were pompous or overly grand—despite, I suspect, too often finding herself surrounded by them. She loved Scotland the most of any country and was at her happiest when driving around in the lashing rain at Balmoral, gently torturing urban Westminster politicians who arrived with city clothes and sometimes starched personalities.

While no one imagined that the Queen was a political radical, those who talked to her privately report that she had moved with the times, whether on climate change, gender equality, LGBT rights or a recent decision to stop wearing fur. Though she was possibly—probably—not a passionate Scottish independence supporter, she seems to have enjoyed warm relations with recent First Ministers, who appear to have been as charmed by her as the most ardent Unionist. She loved, apparently, being called Elizabeth, Queen of Scots—perhaps recognising that the advice to take the title of Elizabeth II all those decades ago was not the most inclusive given to her.

The Queen was among the last of the war-time generation. That gave her a special bond with politicians who had served: Heath and Healey, Callaghan and Jenkins. They were a generation who saw the devastation that war caused in our continent, and were committed to building a new, more united Europe. My much-loved mum, who died recently, was the Queen's age and a passionate supporter of European integration, because she had known the horror of war and celebrated the peace that our generation perhaps appreciates too little. One of the most moving tributes to the Queen this week, as we all know, has come from the French President. We will miss her, and we will together celebrate her life over the coming days and weeks. May she rest in peace.

5.46 pm

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): I rise on behalf of the people of Shrewsbury and the surrounding Shropshire villages to pay tribute to Her Majesty. When I met Her Majesty at Buckingham Palace, she looked at me and immediately started to tease me—to rib me mercilessly—about the difference in height, she being 5 feet 2 inches and me being 6 feet 9 inches. Of course, that immediately broke the ice. I was so nervous at meeting my sovereign for the first

time, and it was so good to have that joke at the start of our interaction. Later on in the evening, she was standing at one end of the room and I was at the other end. In front of everybody, she continued teasing me with a gesture about the difference in height.

The most important thing that happened that evening, however, was that the Queen realised that I was the only Polish-born British Member of Parliament. She started to talk to me about her pride in the contribution of Polish fighter pilots during the second world war. She referenced the fact that the Polish 303 squadron shot down more enemy aircraft in the battle of Britain than any other squadron did, and she paid tribute to the extraordinary contribution of Polish mathematicians and cryptographers in helping to break the enigma code at Bletchley, and to the forces that joined the British Eighth Army in north Africa and at Monte Cassino. Of course, my heart melted.

Being the only Polish-born British Member of Parliament and listening to our sovereign outlining her pride in the Polish contribution, and talking about how her father had outlined to her his pride in it, is something that I will always remember. She reigned so successfully because she used emotional intelligence, and emotional intelligence was her driving force. The communist regime in the country of my birth has been consigned to the ash heap of history because it ruled through fear, intimidation and the secret police. It is gone, whereas Her Majesty's memory is eternal because of the love and kindness that she showed us all.

5.49 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Dulwich and West Norwood. My sincere condolences go to His Majesty the King, the royal family and all who grieve her loss.

Her late Majesty made a commitment at the age of 21 that she would dedicate her whole life to the service of the British people, and the fulfilment of that promise over more than seven decades is truly extraordinary. Unlike other hon. and right hon. Members, I did not have the privilege of meeting the late Queen personally, but I know that she maintained, as she did with communities across the country, a very strong relationship with our part of south London, most notably with King's College Hospital.

The late Queen visited King's College Hospital three times during her reign, first as part of her coronation tour in 1953, just five years after the founding of the NHS. She visited again in 1968 to open the Ruskin wing, and once more in 2003 to open the Golden Jubilee wing, which was a much-needed improvement in facilities at King's.

The late Queen also visited Brixton as part of her silver jubilee celebrations in 1977. A lovely photograph held by Lambeth archives shows Brixton's diverse community coming out to welcome her and the Queen smiling and clearly making eye contact with a child in the front row of the crowd.

Most recently, in 2013, the late Queen visited a small but hugely important charity in Brixton. Ebony Horse Club is a riding centre situated in an area with a high level of deprivation. It is brilliant and enables children from all backgrounds to learn to ride, which is a relatively rare experience in any inner-city setting, and to benefit

from being around animals and learning equestrian skills. The late Queen's love of horses is well documented, and I know it was very special to Ebony Horse Club to have her support for its work in making the experiences that delighted her so much—being around horses, caring for them and riding them—available to everyone, irrespective of income or background. The connection continues today, because the Queen Consort is the patron of Ebony Horse Club and recently hosted not only the staff and riders but a number of horses at a reception at Clarence House.

Our country has seen huge changes and great challenges during the 70 years of the late Queen's reign. It is testament to her character, her humanity and her willingness to reflect and adapt that she was able to be a constant throughout such a long period and through so many changes, especially in her relationship with the Commonwealth. Her late Majesty's lifetime of service will be remembered with gratitude. May she rest in peace.

5.52 pm

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con): I am particularly grateful to be able to contribute to this debate, particularly as I am the Whip on duty. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Whip comments on every Member's contribution to a debate, so I look forward to writing about mine.

I am also pleased to contribute to this debate because I want to convey my Dartford constituents' gratitude for the service given by Her Majesty. Dartford is heartbroken, as we all are. We all dreaded this day, almost believing that it would never happen, but here we are. It seems so odd to be without the Queen, as we all grew up with Her Majesty. My hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) spoke about the silver jubilee crown, and I was also given one when I was a young boy. It was absolutely huge, and I thought I was rich beyond my wildest dreams because I had this huge coin in my hand. I confess to being disappointed when I found out, some time later, that it was worth only 25p. Nevertheless, the crown was priceless because the Queen gave everything for us. Her whole life was committed to us and our welfare. She was the perfect monarch. She loved her people, and she was in turn loved by the people. Nobody in this Chamber has or will ever have her approval ratings—nobody.

Much will change—we will never again sing “God Save the Queen” in our lifetime, for example—but we are so incredibly fortunate to have a King with a huge sense of duty and who genuinely cares about his people and his country. He is just as much at home walking around a Welsh farm as a London council estate. While we are deeply saddened, we can be optimistic about the future thanks to the legacy that Her Majesty the Queen left to us. God save the King.

5.55 pm

Simon Lightwood (Wakefield) (Lab/Co-op): It has been an honour and a privilege to listen to the tributes and anecdotes from Members across the House. I pay tribute, both personally and on behalf of the people of Wakefield, to the service of our remarkable Queen. Her devotion and sacrifice to this nation over her 96 years is an inspiration and guiding light to us all, however long we have been in public life.

[Simon Lightwood]

It is an immense sorrow, but one that gives me deep personal pride, that I was one of the last Members of Parliament to take an oath of allegiance to Her late Majesty the Queen when I took my seat in June. The Queen visited Wakefield several times. I believe the first time was as Princess Elizabeth in 1945, when she visited Pinderfields Hospital. She returned as Queen on her silver jubilee tour in 1977, and again in 1992 to officially open Wakefield Hospice.

Her efforts to extend the hand of the monarchy to all her subjects across the United Kingdom led to the decision to take the traditional Maundy service out of London, choosing a different part of the country each year. So it was that in 2005, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Wakefield Cathedral to distribute the Maundy money, with people from all over the district lining the streets, desperate to catch a glimpse of her. I was fortunate to be there myself and I remember her shining through the crowds, in her inimitable style, wearing brilliant blue. But it was her unforgettable smile and the characteristic twinkle in her eyes that we will remember most.

She was loved by so many in Wakefield and in our nation for her warmth, her dedication and her unshakeable sense of duty. Over her 70 years on the throne, she reigned over huge social, cultural and political change across the United Kingdom, and indeed the world, but through all that she was a constant steadying presence. She met every moment, crisis and problem with her reassuring presence and calming words, always reflecting the mood of the nation. Her Majesty was, and will always be, our nation's north star. The example that she set for us all will continue to shine bright in our memories, to guide us and to inspire us towards a better tomorrow.

On behalf of the people of Wakefield, Horbury and Ossett, I thank Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for her love and service to our nation, and our thoughts and prayers are with King Charles III and the royal family. God save the King.

5.57 pm

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): In 2012, prior to the diamond jubilee, the Queen hosted a reception at Buckingham Palace for national newspaper editors, the usual great and the good, and, to my surprise, technology editors as well. That induced the unique, gut-wrenching dual anxiety of having to meet Her Majesty, and having to do so with my boss. Thankfully, the Duke of Edinburgh said that technologists, such as myself, were there because people like us knew "what was going on". That put me at ease, at least for the seconds before I realised he had just said explicitly something that I had only ever optimistically inferred from working with my bosses.

Perhaps surprisingly, the digital jubilee reception was not a novel concept. The Queen understood that she had to be seen to be believed. We knew her first in the '40s and '50s via black and white photos, the wireless and that scratchily televised coronation, which was so many people's first experience of television. By the 2020s, it was ultra-high definition video, and in the lockdown of 2020 it was Zoom. She moved with the times, and the times moved with her. She was present in our lives in a

way that moved even places like Boston and Skegness, which she never visited, to hold street parties in her honour, and that now moves many there to tears.

I met His Majesty King Charles at a reception for Roberts Radio, which is a long-standing warrant holder. He, too, knows that technology can make his family's warmth and service palpable around the world. He used the opportunity to do an impression from "The Goon Show", which only time sadly precludes me from recreating in the House. With TV cameras in the Accession Council, we have already seen more of what it is to be a monarch than we could ever have done previously, and long may that continue. It is familiarity and closeness that fosters hope and togetherness with our sovereign.

I said that we first saw Her Majesty in black and white, and later on Zoom. I should, of course, have said that we are unlikely to see such a lengthy reign again, with its diligence, humility and uplifting love. Thanks to the times in which she lived, we are blessed to have felt uniquely close to so much of it. That makes her absence feel so personal and acute. Grief is the price we pay for love. God save the King.

6 pm

Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP): I rise to speak to the memory of Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of my many Angus constituents who held her close in their affections. The Queen was a very popular figure across much of Scotland and especially in Angus. That fondness was a consequence of her personal characteristics, such as her demeanour, warmth and character, much more than any sort of institutional devotion.

The Queen's length of service over seven decades afforded people a sense of continuity and stability in a world that changed immeasurably over her reign. Her great appreciation for Scotland and Angus is a source of great pride for many Scots. Her mother was a child of Angus, being born in Glamis, and Her Majesty visited Angus multiple times. She was in Kirriemuir in 1969 and returned in 2004, when she also visited Arbroath and Forfar at the same time. It is well understood that she was happiest at Balmoral in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, and her very public fondness for her highland home was naturally also a source of pride in Scotland. The astonishing landscape in which Balmoral is set is adjacent to our iconic Angus glens, so I know keenly why the Queen valued her time in this part of Scotland so much. I believe it must have been a great comfort to her to be there in her final hours with her family around her.

Unlike many hon. Members, I did not get to meet the late Queen, but as a four-year-old in Perth, I can still remember the excitement in the streets as we queued and waited for the still quite young Queen to pass as part of her silver jubilee celebrations in 1977. Again in Perth in 2012, as a local councillor, I witnessed her incredible professionalism, charm and patience as she presented the keys to the city and restored Perth to city status as part of her diamond jubilee celebrations.

I wish to extend my condolences to the millions of people grieving at the death of Her late Majesty, but death, especially the death of a mother, bears hardest on the family, no matter who she is, so I convey my sympathies to all her family. The Queen was also a defender of her faith. She took that role very seriously and, as such, demonstrated her outstanding credentials

as a committed Christian. When I pray for the repose of her soul, I have great confidence that she will now be in the arms of God. May she rest in peace.

6.3 pm

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): It is my sorrowful task to express the grief and sadness of the people of Blackpool North and Cleveleys at the loss of Her late Majesty. We also send our best wishes to our new King Charles III. As part of the red rose county, we have lost not just our monarch but our Duke of Lancaster.

I am one of those who never had the chance to meet Her Majesty, like the vast majority of my constituents, but I know the affection in which we all held her. Every flag displayed on every house, every strip of bunting hung up in every street, every cupcake consumed at every event in the summer for the platinum jubilee demonstrated the affection in which she was held across the Fylde coast. Now Blackpool has even dimmed its famous illuminations out of respect for her passing.

In Blackpool, we remember fondly the last time the Queen came to our town, in 2009, to see the royal variety performance. I have often wondered what a woman in her early 80s made of the pop sensations of 2009, as she sat there probably wishing that it would all be over soon and she could go to bed. One lesson I took from that is that, for pop stars and indeed politicians, fame is transitory, but the renown of a monarch such as her will echo down the ages.

For seven decades, the Queen has been inextricably intertwined with our nationhood, our sense of identity and who we are as a nation. She has shared our highs and our lows, our triumphs and our disasters, and we have shared hers—the high times, the good times, the jubilees and the celebrations, but also the lows. Who will ever forget the sight of her sitting alone in St George's Chapel in Windsor at the funeral of her late husband?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green) used the word “uncertainty” as we began our tributes today, and I feel that sense of uncertainty myself—I feel somewhat bereft. We face difficult, uncertain times, but we look to the Queen's example of duty, sacrifice, regard for others and steadfastness. Whatever the coming years and months may hold, we will hold true to her memory and the example she set. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

6.6 pm

Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough. For people across Sheffield, Her Majesty was a great source of comfort and stability across her 70-year reign. She was our Queen; she belonged to us. We had good times and we had bad times, but all the time she held a special place in all our hearts.

I want to talk briefly about one occasion when the Queen's importance to my city really shone through. In 2001, Sheffield had the great honour of welcoming Her Majesty as she opened the fabulous brand-new Millennium Gallery. It is impossible to overstate what this meant to the city. Never before or since have I seen so many people; it seemed like there were thousands in the

streets of Sheffield just trying to catch a glimpse of their beloved Queen. Their joy, enthusiasm and anticipation were humbling.

Having been a council lead for arts and culture for just a few weeks, I had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh at the door of the gallery, and I managed to curtsy without falling flat on my face—this was a great relief. She was incredibly generous with her time, ensuring that she spoke to as many people as possible. Her dignity, compassion and sense of humour shone through throughout the entire day.

That evening we welcomed Her Majesty to a very fancy dinner hosted by the then Lord Mayor. As Members can imagine, this was a carefully orchestrated occasion, which took many months of detailed planning. However, on the day, we learned that Her Majesty's favourite drink was none other than Dubonnet and lemonade. Not having any to hand, we quickly sped to the Lord Mayor's office to go through the drinks cabinet to see whether there was any there. I have to report that there was not. So someone was sent out to scour the streets of Sheffield, because there was no way Sheffield was going to be known as the one city that could not provide the Queen with her favourite tippie. I am pleased to say that we were able to find it just in time before the dinner. I will always have fond memories of that day—not least as it was one of only two occasions on which I have worn a hat. It brought such joy to Sheffield, bringing together so many people from across the city.

Her Majesty represented a unifying figure above the divides of politics, and everybody looked to her for comfort in good times and solace in bad. Her sense of duty was truly felt by all. I and all my constituents in Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough express our deepest sympathies and condolences to the royal family. We share in their grief and sorrow and will miss her greatly. May she rest in peace, and may God save the King.

6.9 pm

Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): Sadly, I never met the Queen. It was something I had always hoped to do. However, as for most people in our country and the Commonwealth, she was always a positive presence in my life.

We remember that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was not only our Head of State and the mother of our nation, but had the same responsibilities and duties for the peoples of our dependent sovereign territories—faraway places such as the Falkland Islands—and for the Governments and peoples of the Commonwealth nations around the world. That was brought home to me in an amazing way when I was chairman of the all-party group on Gibraltar.

Gibraltar National Day is today, 10 September, when Gibraltar celebrates its unique identity and its Britishness. Normally, there is a huge rally in Casemates Square, which is right in the middle of Gibraltar. It is a fantastic occasion, when the whole place is festooned with Union flags and the red and white of the Gibraltar flag. Today, the celebrations have been postponed until next year, and the proclamation of King Charles III was shown on the screens in Casemates Square. Fabian Picardo, the Chief Minister, spoke yesterday of a “cloud of sorrow” over the Rock. The Royal Gibraltar Regiment had a 96-gun salute.

[Jack Lopresti]

In happier times, in the diamond jubilee year of 2012, the National Day rally had a huge picture of the Queen, and every platform speaker expressed thanks and appreciation for Her Majesty's service and spoke of their pride in their Britishness and in their Queen, referring to the fact that she had visited Gibraltar. On the platform that day, Fabian used a phrase that I had not heard before but that encapsulates how the Queen was a great unifier of many different peoples and nations. He said that the people of Gibraltar, other sovereign territories and the Commonwealth are all part of the "great British family"—even more so in Gibraltar, a small piece of rock, with a real melting pot of different religions and cultures, within physical sight of the north African coast. Everyone was united on that day, with an outpouring of love, pride and appreciation for our monarch. It reminded me of that old Latin quote, "civis romanus sum"—"I am a Roman citizen"—which one could be, from Africa to northern Britannia, regardless of one's place of birth or religion.

Yesterday evening, I rushed back to my constituency to attend a service at St Peter's church in Filton. The congregation was told by the Rev. Lizzie Gregory that it was not a service of commemoration—that will come—but a time for the community to come together, support one other, grieve together and give thanks. It was a wonderful service and it was great to see so many people there. Most had come on foot from nearby. I could sense the pride, depth of emotion and the community supporting one another.

I do not normally quote French Heads of State, unless they were born in Corsica, but President Macron's comments on the passing of the Queen sum up how we and the rest of the world saw her:

"To you, she was your Queen. To us, she was The Queen. She will be with all of us forever."

6.12 pm

Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab): I rise today to pay tribute to a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and our longest serving monarch. I extend my sincere condolences and those of everyone in my city of Coventry to His Majesty the King and all the royal family.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth II was one of intense social and economic transformation, and yet she remained the firm cornerstone of our collective lives. People all over the globe were reassured by the Queen, as a force of constancy and dependability when all around them was ever changing.

Coventry has been blessed with many visits by the Queen over the years. In 1956, just four years into her reign, the Queen visited the ruins of the first St Michael's cathedral in Coventry, and laid the foundation stone for the new cathedral next door. After years of relentless bombing throughout the second world war—bombing that destroyed so much of the city, devastated thousands of homes, hospitals and schools, and took countless lives—the city was beset by grief and a deep sense of loss, as it is today. However, a visit from Her Majesty the Queen breathed new life into our community. The impact that she had on our city was certainly significant—in the city of peace and reconciliation, her presence gave people hope for the future, despite the tragedies of the past.

In 1994 the Queen visited the then Jaguar factory at Browns Lane in my constituency. It was a visit that my constituents valued and fondly remember. This year, during the various platinum jubilee celebrations that I attended across my constituency, many shared stories about their love and adoration of the Queen. To many in Coventry, she was a symbol of optimism, the new world and the future. That is certainly how our city will remember her.

My own prayers are with the members of the royal family during this difficult time. The Queen was a spiritual leader for so many Christians and a moral guide for anyone in public life. In churches and places of worship in Coventry and across the country, we will be taking this time to reflect her values and her exceptional life. Today, we mourn our beloved Queen, and we are grateful beyond measure for everything that she gave us. May her soul rest in peace. God save the King.

6.15 pm

Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me as Chief Whip to speak this afternoon. This is an opportunity rarely afforded to members of the Whips Office, who normally keep quiet, but this is such an important occasion. I want to recognise the special and unique relationship that the Whips Office had with Her late Majesty's household, through the positions that some Whips hold, and to pay tribute to Her late Majesty on behalf of all my Aldridge-Brownhills constituents.

We all have personal stories and memories. I never actually met the Queen, but I often saw her at a distance. I reflect on how, during the silver jubilee in 1977—I was a little bit younger than I am now—I cut the pictures out of my mum's magazines and the newspapers to create a scrapbook. So many of us did that in the days before social media—I see hon. Members nodding. I still have that scrapbook somewhere at home; when I get back, I want to go and find it. I have so many memories of that jubilee and how the village came together as a community. Everybody was a part of it.

I reflect on the more recent platinum jubilee celebrations across my constituency and the many community events—the tea parties and street parties—that took place, but most of all I remember the tremendous community spirit, which is a hallmark of Aldridge-Brownhills and a real testament to the huge amount of love and respect that so many had for Her late Majesty. She not only really understood people, communities and the nation, but had a unique way of bringing our country together.

In speaking on behalf of my constituency, we remember and recognise above all Her late Majesty's service and duty to all across our nation, the Commonwealth and, indeed, the world. She was truly remarkable. For many of us, she was and will remain an inspiration. As we come together as a nation to mourn the loss of Her late Majesty and say farewell, I do so while pledging my total commitment and support to King Charles III. God save the King.

6.18 pm

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): It is an honour and a privilege to take part in the debate paying tribute to our greatest Queen. Many of us in the Chamber probably knew no other monarch. A great debt of gratitude is owed to the royal family and to the Queen

for the service she gave not only to this nation but to the Commonwealth, and the duty that she performed in that.

I did get to meet the Queen. As has been said, everyone seems to have known her. I think a statistic came out in recent days stating that 31% of the population of the United Kingdom had either met or been introduced to the Queen. That is a tremendous number of people in a population the size of the United Kingdom's.

I met King Charles III when he was Prince Charles. When introducing a group of people to him, I made the mistake of putting my hand around his shoulder, as I tend to do, and I was threatened with being thrown into the Tower! When I was asked at a Hillsborough garden party to introduce a group of 10 people to Her Majesty, I remembered that I had committed that crime, and I made sure not to put my arm around her.

It is with fondness that I remember the Queen. Everyone has mentioned how she had this bright, vibrant way, but some in our community could not tolerate her. She came to Northern Ireland to open the Queen Elizabeth II bridge, on 4 July 1966. A gentleman there decided that he would throw a brick from a building on to the Queen's car, and he was arrested by police officer Sergeant John McIver, who has since died. That man had hatred for our monarch in him, but she showed grace and continued in her duties for that day as though nothing had happened. That says far more about the Queen.

I say thank you to the Queen and to her family for what they have done. God save the King.

6.21 pm

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): Thursday was one of those days when it seems as if the world has stopped. In the streets, crowds of people looked at the notifications coming up on their phones, stopped and looked at each other without speaking, because everyone was thinking the same thing: the day that we all hoped would never come had finally come. It was the day we lost the best servant and best leader that this country could ever hope to have.

Since then we have been thinking, as we have heard from the speeches in the House, about the incredible honour and privilege it is to be able to call ourselves Elizabethans. I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty on my behalf, that of my family, and that of my constituency of Witney and west Oxfordshire.

I think about the early contact that west Oxfordshire had with Her Majesty, the first example of which may have been in 1928, during the reign of King George VI, when its most famous son, Winston Churchill, stayed with the royal family at Balmoral. He wrote to his wife Clementine:

"There is no one here at all except the family, the Household & Princess Elizabeth—aged 2. The last is a character. She has an air of authority & reflectiveness astonishing in an infant".

Is it not extraordinary, yet not surprising, that Winston Churchill picked out so early the very qualities in Her Majesty that would make her such a revered individual, the most famous woman in the world and the most revered monarch in our history? She had an easy authority, which so many hon. Members have referred to today.

Throughout her 70 years of service, she saw unparalleled change. When she was a girl, the Royal Air Force was flying aircraft of wood and canvas, but she reached a

time of fast, supersonic planes that do not even need a pilot—utterly extraordinary levels of change. She remained the same, yet she changed as society changed.

It is not just that the Queen had always been here, true though that is; it is not just that she was a constant, but that she was a unifying constant. We will all have different memories, but what is gone is not lost. The memories we have of her remain, and her example can guide us as we weather the storms of today and tomorrow. As we heard in the electrifying speech by His Majesty the King last night, that duty will continue. Although our voices are choked with emotion, we can all rally with the timeless cry: God save the King.

6.24 pm

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): It is a sad privilege to rise to speak on behalf of my constituents in Newcastle-under-Lyme, to offer our condolences to His Majesty and the whole royal family, and to give thanks for the life and service of Her Majesty.

As Britons, we are lucky to live in a constitutional monarchy, but to have had the Queen as our constitutional monarch we were more than lucky; we were blessed. I believe that she is the greatest public servant this nation has ever seen. Through 70 years, she has led this nation through profound challenges and seen profound change, not just in this nation but throughout the world and across the Commonwealth. She has led and guided us throughout with her grace, her wisdom and her example. She visited us in Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1973 for our octocentenary. Constituents of mine of a certain age will remember that, and as we prepare to celebrate 850 years next year, those memories will now be all the more poignant.

As we remember Her Majesty, I would like to pay tribute to the way that she has led this nation. Only earlier this week we had the transfer of power. She continued to take her constitutional responsibilities with the utmost seriousness to the end, and I am sure the Prime Minister was extremely grateful for her advice only on Tuesday.

I have sat in the Chamber and listened to much of the debate, both yesterday and today. There have been some very fine and moving speeches, and some very funny ones, on all sides. I think the finest speech I have heard was not from the Dispatch Box or from these Benches, and it was not even from the Opposition Benches. It was from the monitor screens in here yesterday, when we listened to His Majesty address the nation. It was a profoundly fine and moving speech, and it confirmed to me what I already knew from his many years of service as the Prince of Wales: that the Crown is in very safe hands and that we can look forward with confidence as we go through yet another trying time for our nation. He will follow his mother's example, leading us into a new era. God save the King.

6.27 pm

Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence in allowing the Whips to speak and pay tribute.

I rise to give thanks for the wonderful, long life of Her Majesty, our Queen Elizabeth, on behalf of myself, but also the people of the Bury St Edmunds constituency. As many others have said, she was ours—for each and

[Jo Churchill]

every one of us. She was special to us individually, young and old, in this great country, in the Commonwealth and beyond. We have relied on her to be there, and on her constancy, her service, her humour and her love.

Many in this Chamber, as others have said, have recounted amusing tales of those twinkling eyes resting on them and that sense of fun. She has visited my constituency, like others, many times, the final occasion being for the Maundy service in our cathedral, and she left her mark.

But as I sat in this Chamber and we listened to the King yesterday, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell) said, I wanted to say this: that our thoughts and prayers are with her family and her friends, who, for their entire lives, have had to share with us their mother, their grandmother, their great-grandmother, their friend or, for her dear late husband, his wife. May they now be comforted by us, and by our expressions of gratitude and love for the late Queen, as they carry on, as she did, with duty and stoicism, constantly and consistently showing us the way. So to her we say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, although it feels not enough. As her faith took her through her life, may it take her on her final journey, and may she rest in peace.

Finally, earlier this week I was truly honoured to be appointed Vice-Chamberlain, so I say with feeling, in anticipation of having to write to His Majesty the King daily, God save the King.

6.29 pm

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): I rise on behalf of my constituents to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen's decades of service to our nation—decades of service delivered with humility, with warmth, with wisdom, and with gentle humour.

As chair of the all-party parliamentary group for woods and trees, I wrote to all my local schools earlier this year inviting them to take part in the Queen's green canopy scheme—planting a tree for the jubilee. I visited many of those schools, and we planted the tree. Afterwards, we had a Q&A session. I was often asked if I knew Boris. "Yes, he is my boss," I would say—or "was my boss". Was I rich? I tried to not really answer that one. Then, of course, I would always be asked whether I had ever met the Queen. I would say, "Yes, a number of times—I have been very fortunate", and the children would gasp with excitement. I would tell them about the number of times I had met her while, as a young Royal Air Force officer, I was based at RAF West Raynham in Norfolk, near Fakenham. Sandringham was just up the road, so Her Majesty was a regular visitor to our RAF station.

Some 20 years after that, as an MP, I was invited to Buckingham Palace, as MPs are, for an audience with Her Majesty. She was asking me about my constituency, and I told her that the market town of Holmfirth was in my patch. I said, "Your Majesty, it is where they film 'Last of the Summer Wine' on BBC One", and her face lit up with a big smile. I do not know whether she watched it or not, but to this day I have a lovely image of her sitting down in an armchair on a Sunday teatime, after a busy week, turning on BBC One, and enjoying the gentle antics of Nora Batty, Compo and Cleggy—not that Cleggy! [Laughter.] And—relax.

The past 48 hours have been a very emotional time for our nation, but having listened to my constituents today, I know that they were greatly comforted by His Majesty the King's reassuring and deeply personal address to the nation last night. I look forward to heading back to Yorkshire this evening so that I can be at Huddersfield town hall tomorrow for the royal proclamation. Let me end by simply saying this: God bless Her Majesty the Queen, and God save the King.

6.32 pm

Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con): I rise to pay tribute, and to offer heartfelt condolences on behalf of the people of Barrow and Furness, and my family, to King Charles and his family on the death of Her late Majesty.

Her Majesty served our nation for 70 years with a remarkable and unstinting sense of duty that should inspire us all, but even with tens of thousands of hours of her life captured on film and written about in so many column inches, we knew nothing about her politics or her views on any policy debated in this place, despite what we may have thought or suspected. The fact that she held audiences with Prime Ministers through wars, pandemics and times of national crisis and kept her counsel, even with the passage of so many years, speaks volumes about her character and her sense of duty.

Her Majesty was a fixture in our lives. All my life she has been there: she has been a constant. When I was young and fell in love with books for the first time, there she was, greeting Sophie and the Big Friendly Giant at the end of Roald Dahl's novel. What I saw in my mind was not a character in a story with a crown on her head; it was our Queen. She was so much a part of our world and my world, and so magical at the same time, that of course it was entirely possible that it was Her Majesty taking breakfast with a giant.

I am glad that that sense of wonder and magic crosses the generations. My children were delighted to see the Queen sharing the screen and her jam sandwiches with Paddington Bear. She was comfortable with herself and her role—always a steady hand on the tiller of our nation as our unflappable, constant monarch, but still aware of what she meant to people and the joy and comfort that she could and did bring.

Her late Majesty was a friend and frequent visitor to Barrow and south Lakeland. She launched HMS Dreadnought, our first nuclear submarine, and when she launched the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible a crowd of 15,000 people gathered in the drizzle to witness her blessing the ship and christening it with a bottle of elderberry wine. She visited Furness General Hospital, our town hall and the *North-West Evening Mail* and opened our market. Celebrating her platinum jubilee, I was struck by just how many constituents came forward with stories of times they had met Her Majesty and just how important those moments were to them. Many of those moments were fleeting, but the impact that they made was substantial.

It has been quoted a few times today and yesterday, but Her late Majesty once said:

"Grief is the price we pay for love."

We loved that remarkable lady for her service, her dignity and her unstinting dedication to the nation and to her people. In grief, we can reflect on that dedication

to us and perhaps draw some comfort from her service and her life. I certainly hope that her family and His Majesty King Charles will find solace in the grace and gratitude of our nation. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

6.36 pm

Mr Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): It is a sad honour to be called to speak in these tributes to Her late Majesty. As many colleagues have said, she was a constant throughout our lives. I have said before that I regard myself as a son of the Commonwealth; one of the proudest realisations in the past 48 hours is that while we may have lost our Queen, the world has lost “the” Queen.

The Queen visited South West Hertfordshire a few times, and the last two visits of which I am aware are emblematic of who she was. In 2010, she opened the Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, in the south of my constituency; all my ex-military friends are sorrowful about her passing. Her most recent visit was in 2016, when she came to visit Berkhamsted School, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts) is an alumnus. She was a patron of the school, which was celebrating its 475th anniversary. When I visited the school recently, I could still see the look of wonder in the eyes of the children who had had the honour of meeting her. I never had that honour, but when I was a lot younger, on the rare occasions when my parents used to drive past Buckingham Palace, we always looked with fondness to see whether the royal standard was up. My father, probably treasonously, used to say, “Is Auntie Liz in?”

Like most families, mine have been speaking about the Queen over the past few days. My brother-in-law mentioned that normally people have photos of their loved ones in their wallet or purse. I would argue that each and every one of us has a photo of our loved one, the Queen, by virtue of the notes. I think that that is a fitting tribute to someone I regard as an amazing woman.

On behalf of the constituents of South West Hertfordshire, may I send my condolences to the whole royal family? They have lost a loved one, and the country has lost a great champion for our values. I do not think that there will be another like her for many generations to come. God save the King.

6.38 pm

Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con): It is with profound sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of my constituents in west Berkshire. She was the lodestar of our national life, and in west Berkshire she was treasured for her passionate engagement in racing, our signature pastime. She was a frequent visitor to Newbury racecourse, sent multiple champions for training in Lambourn and even purchased her own racing stables in West Ilsley. The legendary Lambourn trainer Nicky Henderson told me that when a foal of particularly promising parentage was born in the spring of this year, she said, “Nicky, when this one runs for the first time as a four-year-old, I’ll be 100, you’ll be 75 and we’ll be the oldest owner-trainer combination in the world.”

In the end it was not to be, but it was at Newbury racecourse that Her late Majesty saw some of the greatest triumphs of her racing life. In April 1958, six

years into her reign, she was there when Doutelle gave her a first winner in the John Porter stakes. It was the year when Harold Macmillan was Prime Minister, Sputnik 1 was launched into space, Elvis topped the charts with “Jailhouse Rock” and Vietnam stood on the brink of war.

She saw victory again in August 1967 with Hopeful Venture in the Geoffrey Freer stakes. It was the era of Harold Wilson and the Beatles, when NASA was putting the finishing touches to its preparations for launching man on to the moon. Just after Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 election landslide, she was there again with Rhyme Royal, which came home for her in the London gold cup. It was the year of the Iran hostage crisis and the assassination of Lord Mountbatten at the hands of the IRA. She saw Phantom Gold cruise to victory in 1996—the year of the Dunblane massacre and just months before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Her last visit to Newbury was in 2017. She entered the winners enclosure just one day after her 91st birthday, when Call to Mind was victorious in the Dubai Duty Free maiden stakes. The country was in the midst of a general election campaign, and was reeling from terrorist attacks in Westminster, London Bridge and Manchester.

Through her reign—war and peace, triumph and disaster, Presidents and Prime Ministers—she was our strength and our comfort, and we in Newbury will always be proud that she derived moments of pure joy from the place that we call home. I send my sincere condolences to the royal family, and also to the family of the Princess of Wales, who are my constituents. May she rest in peace.

6.41 pm

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): It is a great honour to stand here representing the people of Clacton, who I know from what I have heard and seen and read loved our Queen and are in deep mourning now. She was an incredible woman, and I had the honour of meeting her on a couple of occasions, as well as many members of her family. She had that one now not-so-secret weapon, which was the devastating smile that she would unleash mercilessly and bring people to her. In many ways her personality shone through that smile. She was my Queen, she was your Queen, she was each individual’s Queen. She was the people of Clacton’s Queen, she was the UK’s Queen and she was the Queen of her realms overseas. She was the Queen to so many people around the world, and I read only yesterday that 93% of the world’s population have known no other monarch. She is the Queen—she is gone and we mourn her deeply.

I would like to tell a brief story about my father’s relationship with the Queen. He had the unenviable task of having to introduce her to 25 members of the board of the Royal Theatrical Fund. On a good day, my father, although he was a great actor, had difficulty remembering his own name, so it was with great trepidation that he faced this task. He came up with this wonderful scheme, saying “I shall remember one in five of you, so I only have to remember five names. I will introduce Tom, and Tom will introduce Bert, George, Harry and Fred, and so on.” That worked tremendously, except that on the morning of the meeting everybody brought their husbands and wives with them, so the room was full and crowded, and my mother was there too. However, my father’s scheme still worked. He introduced Tom,

[Giles Watling]

who introduced Fred, Harry, Jane and Sheila, and so on, but he forgot to introduce my mother. The Queen said, “And who is this?” and my father could not remember her name, so he said, “At home we call her mother.” [Laughter.] To say that the Queen was amused is a vast understatement. She immediately went to the bar and asked for a drink.

My father had many happy memories of the Queen, as do I. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

6.43 pm

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): Many great tributes have already been made—it is great to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Giles Watling), and I hope his mother was able to overcome that experience—and an honour to be able to add to them with the great tributes of the people of Macclesfield constituency, who are in mourning with a deep sense of loss, like so many others across the nation. Her Majesty’s life was a beacon, the embodiment of the principle of public service and unfailing duty. We are all grateful for her example. It will be cherished for the rest of our lives and throughout history.

My wife, Rachel, and I were fortunate to meet Her Majesty at Buckingham Palace with a number of other colleagues, including several from Scotland, from the Opposition Benches. The Queen loved Scotland. She loved the Union and she loved the Commonwealth. What impressed both of us the most was the sincere interest that Her Majesty showed to those whom she met. She showed genuine love and concern to all those she worked to serve, and we are most grateful for that.

On that occasion, Prince Philip talked of his fond memories of carriage driving in Henbury and enjoying services at St Alban’s Church in Macclesfield. The Queen visited Macclesfield as a young 23-year-old princess to celebrate the town’s unique silk heritage at Hurdsfield mills, and then again in 2002 as part of the golden jubilee tour, visiting King’s School. Sadly, she was not able to visit the iconic Jodrell Bank telescope site to celebrate it receiving UNESCO world heritage status in 2020 because of the pandemic. She would have been so very proud of its new First Light Pavilion that had just opened.

We all think we know our constituencies well, but the Queen really understood the communities and geography that she served throughout the entire nation. Historians will write about Queen Elizabeth as a statesman, a diplomat, a defender of all faiths and a much-loved and respected monarch through 70 years of dedicated service, but it was also about what she wrote in our hearts. Millions of people across the country and in the Commonwealth family of nations will be her real lasting legacy. With her sad passing, we all now have the responsibility to live up to that legacy, to renew and recommit ourselves in our service to others and, in so doing, we will show our true gratitude to this wonderful servant who, although only a little over 5ft tall, was a towering figure in our nation’s history. May she rest in peace.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the royal family and with our new King Charles III as he takes forward his new duties. We pray that he will be granted strength, wisdom and the enduring influence of his much-loved mother. God save the King.

6.47 pm

Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con): I was visited by a number of my constituents yesterday. I had forgotten what we were there to discuss and so had they. All they could talk about was the Queen. They were sad to begin with and then they moved on to positive things. Their condolences were combined with really positive feelings for her.

At the end of 1953, the Queen and the Duke visited New Zealand—New Zealand is as far away as you can get from Buckingham Palace without coming back. It is still heavily royal, and it certainly was at that time. Public reaction to the visit was so positive that I suddenly realised—even though I was only knee-high to a grasshopper—that there was a very important person called “the Queen”. The Queen and Prince Philip had a really positive following when they arrived just before Christmas, which they had greatly engendered as a result of their sympathetic and instant positive reaction in response to the Tangiwai disaster. What happened was that the royal couple arrived in New Zealand on 23 December, and, the following day, Christmas eve 1953, a railway bridge over the Tangiwai gorge collapsed, and it collapsed just as a heavily loaded express train rolled onto it. The locomotive and the first six carriages were derailed and went into the river, killing 151 people. The tour stopped. The royal couple were involved in all the sympathy, the memorials, and meeting the people—those who had lost relatives and those who had survived. Their position in New Zealand rose higher than you could possibly imagine. What happened really solidified the very strong standing that they had in the eyes of the New Zealand public—whether they were Pākehā or Māori. They charmed their way across the country. Many Members have talked today or yesterday about the Commonwealth, and that was the way the Queen became the linchpin of the Commonwealth. She charmed her way with Presidents, Prime Ministers and the people of those 56 nations and the 2.5 billion people who make up the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is vital to our position and to some sanity on this Earth. We now look to our new King to continue the Queen’s success. It is a huge job. I wish him well because he is filling some huge shoes that were worn by a very small, but enormously successful, lady. I wish him well and pray that it works as well as it did with his mother.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. Before I call Mark Logan, I want to put on the record my appreciation and that of the people of Ribble Valley for the Queen. She had a strong relationship with Ribble Valley. I met her there and was honoured to meet her here in London as well. It was rumoured by a lady-in-waiting that if ever Her Majesty retired, she would want to retire into the Ribble Valley, but we all know she never intended to retire, because hers was a lifetime of service for which we are incredibly grateful. We will miss her. God save the King.

6.51 pm

Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con): It is a sorrowful privilege to rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of Bolton North East. We are faced with the indescribable loss of the guardian of our

traditions and the soul of our nation, but Her Majesty was more than that: for evermore, she will be the United Kingdom. We are feeling this loss, achingly so, in Bolton. You only had to be there during the platinum jubilee celebrations to get a sense of the adulation felt for the Queen in our town. Bolton was, on many occasions, the preferred destination of Her Majesty. In 1953, not long after taking the throne, the Queen's first-ever football match was the FA cup final between Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers at Wembley stadium. Wanderers lost 4-3—though that was later remedied in 1958 when the Duke of Edinburgh awarded them the FA cup after they beat Man United 2-0.

Her Majesty first visited Bolton in 1954 where the royal train pulled up into Trinity Street station, and in 1968 she visited St Paul's church in Halliwell. In 1988, Queen Elizabeth II visited Bolton to celebrate the town's 150th birthday, witnessing investment into the town centre, and 30 years on, the town is being revamped once again. Her last visit was to Warburtons, where the rock that was forever by her side—the Duke of Edinburgh—joked with factory workers. I was going to say, "Imagine being a fly on the wall for some of those jokes", but Warburtons has a great hygiene regime in place and therefore no flies.

We MPs may think we are busy running around our constituencies, but Her Majesty was able to see so many people and places in each of our respective areas. She was there all along, as our living environments and country went through inevitable change. We can learn from her integrity and live up to higher standards—for she was the standard. The wave of her hand, the comfort of her words at 3 pm on Christmas day and the steps she took on every footpath across the kingdom and the Commonwealth kept us all on the one road. We will never cease to miss and cherish her. As Her Majesty said during June's celebrations,

"I hope this renewed sense of togetherness will be felt for many years to come".

As we are brought together here to mourn our collective loss, I say, God bless the Queen. God save the King.

6.54 pm

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): It is with great sadness that I stand today, on behalf of the people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke, to share in our collective grief at the loss of the grandmother of the nation, Her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. Like the constituencies of many across this House, Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke was blessed to host Her late Majesty the Queen on a few occasions. This went all the way back to 1949, when the then Princess visited the potteries, in the mother town of Burslem. She returned in 1955, visiting 30,000 excited schoolchildren at the old home of Stoke City football club, the Victoria Ground. She visited again in 1999, when she came to the Dudson Centre, meeting members of the touring Hallé orchestra.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) was right when he said that we allowed ourselves to believe Her late Majesty the Queen to be eternal. In preparation for this speech, I reflected on some words from the famous Stoke-on-Trent author Arnold Bennett, who said

"We shall never have more time. We have, and have always had, all the time there is."

Bennett is right, in that we shall no longer have Her late Majesty the Queen as a physical presence in our lives—I have tried to explain that to my daughter Amelia, who, only on Tuesday, was on FaceTime to me while I was lucky enough sit here in this Palace of Westminster and was saying, "Daddy meet the Queen"—but Her late Majesty's legacy will continue to live on forever, in generations yet to come. Her dedication to public service and duty, her national pride and her unwavering personal faith provide lessons for us all to pass down to our children and grandchildren, enabling us to help support her successor, our King, in taking us forward into the future, unsure of what lies ahead but collectively empowering us to stand shoulder to shoulder, undeterred in our love and belief in our United Kingdom. The people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke, including me, give our heartfelt condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and his family at this time, for they have lost not only their Queen, but a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. As we pray that Her late Majesty the Queen lies in eternal peace and happiness, myself and the people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke wish to bear our true faith and allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, as she would have wanted. God save the King.

6.56 pm

Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con): On behalf of my family, friends and the people of South Ribble, I wish to pay tribute to Her Majesty Elizabeth II. This is a sad loss and many people across South Ribble have been in touch with me, from Penwortham, Leyland, Croston, Tarleton and the surrounding villages. A theme within that, especially today, has been how deeply they have wanted to celebrate a remarkable life and a remarkable woman. If the House will bear with me, I should like to give two examples of why, to me, she was the epitome of that.

The Queen was a woman of global influence and respect, including in the Commonwealth, as my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford) mentioned. In an African Commonwealth country, people were sat around the fire and in that conversation we had represented New Zealand, Zulu, Australian, Shangaan, Afrikaans, English, French and American. The conversation turned to the Queen, and it is fair to say that not everybody understands our system and many questions were asked. Ultimately, a little voice said, in a Kiwi accent, "Oh, she's like the ultimate pressure valve on your system." That is what our constitutional monarchy is, and the Queen bore that on her shoulders since she was 25. It was a remarkable life and she was a remarkable woman.

More personal for me is the fact that in the 1980s, when I was growing up, we had a female Prime Minister, a Queen and even a lady in the Speaker's Chair, and it did not occur to seven-year-old me that women were anything other than in charge. I am sure that given her famous sense of humour, which has come across in many of the contributions made here today, the Queen would have enjoyed my surprise at discovering, when I had grown up a little more, that it was not the norm for women to run everything. From a global icon to an inspiration for a little girl, wow, this was the one and only Queen. I might even say that she was the original Spice Girl. Was she the originator of girl power? It is

[Katherine Fletcher]

possible. On behalf of all of us, what I can simply say is: thank you for everything. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

6.59 pm

Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con): It is a privilege to rise, albeit with great sadness, to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents and to send North Devon's deepest condolences to the royal family.

The Queen has been such a constant in our lives, dedicating her life to public service as she said she would, that it is hard to imagine life without her. Her beautiful outfits and hats, her smile and her constant reassuring presence will be sorely missed. Thank you for all you have done, the joy you have brought us and the memories you leave us with.

The Queen visited Barnstaple back in 1956. The royal train arrived at the station at 10 am, and other than a slight hiccup—an official opening the wrong door—the visit went off smoothly. In our pannier market, she was greeted by 5,000 children, who cheered wildly, and I hope many of them who are still with us have recalled that day this week, and indeed still frequent our pannier market. Unfortunately, I was not there in 1956 and I have never had the opportunity to meet the Queen, unlike so many of my longer serving colleagues. One of the joys of this sad time has been to hear their fond memories and wonderful anecdotes.

Although we continue to mourn, with this morning's proclamation we must look to the future. I have no doubt that King Charles III will follow in his mother's fantastic footsteps—and I have met him. Twenty years ago, he was already supporting a wide range of charities and he met ladies from the Moonwalk—a breast cancer charity walk—at Highgrove. If I have the privilege to meet our new monarch again, I may remind him that I was the one in the bra decorated as two strawberries.

May the late Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

7.1 pm

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): My constituents and I thank His Majesty the King for his words of comfort and reassurance following today's proclamation of accession as sovereign. We send His Majesty and the whole royal family our deepest condolences on the death of Her Majesty.

The second Elizabethan age has received many references in the last day and a half of debate. Christchurch probably has more people than any other constituency who can remember the beginning of the second Elizabethan age, in 1952, and I am among those privileged to have lived throughout the late Queen's 70-year reign. I first saw her at her coronation in 1953, when my parents were invited to watch it on a friend's black-and-white television—I think it was the first time I had ever seen a television.

I have been lucky enough to meet Her late Majesty on several occasions, first at an investiture in 1982 and last at an investiture in 2018, but the meeting to which I shall allude took place when I was asked by the Secretary of State for Transport to host the occasion when Her Majesty opened the Queen Elizabeth II bridge across the Thames, linking the two parts of the M25. As a junior Minister, I was tremendously nervous, but Her Majesty put me at my ease. We had a long private

conversation about the bridge, its construction and its funding, and I remember assuring her that the tolls would be lifted as soon as the bridge was paid for. I am pleased to say that Her Majesty kept her counsel on that, as today the tolls are still there even though the bridge has been paid for several times over. I remember that occasion distinctly.

So also do I remember the occasion when Her late Majesty attended the 80th birthday party of Margaret Thatcher. The way she showed her support and encouragement to Margaret Thatcher on that occasion was really moving, because she was not in the best of health. That is an example of the way in which Her late Majesty rose to the occasion. She was not doing something party political—I think Tony Blair was there as well—but her compassion showed through to all of us who had the privilege to be present.

The Queen encapsulated and exemplified all those qualities that make our nation the envy of the world, and make us so proud to be British. The second Elizabethan age, which has drawn to a close this week, will be revered for centuries to come. Weren't we lucky to be part of it?

7.5 pm

James Daly (Bury North) (Con): The 22nd of October 1954 was a rainy, cold day in Bury, but thousands of people lined the streets, waiting for hours in the pouring rain to see the young Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh on their post-coronation trip to the north-west of England, to see the great towns and cities of the north. There is a wonderful Pathé film of the occasion and one can feel down the ages the happiness, excitement, passion and pride of everyone from all the different towns in knowing that for one moment they might see their Queen, who meant so much to them.

Bury has changed greatly since 1954 in all sorts of ways, including socially. The buildings now look very different to the Pathé film, but the excitement, pride, love and devotion of the people of Bury for their sovereign has never changed. The young Princess Elizabeth first came to Bury in 1938—she was very young then. She came back with her father in 1945: Bury was one of the great towns of the north, producing armaments. She came again in 1954, and in 1968 she visited Radcliffe, another great industrial town just outside my constituency. In 1992, she came back again to visit Bury town hall, which she had opened on that rainy day in 1954.

To me, the Queen represents something that is unique and personal. She is linked to every household, every person, every village, every town and every street in this country. She means different things to us all, but she is a constant, and an example of a set of principles that she lived her life by, for which we all loved and admired her. She said to this nation many decades ago that she would give her life in the service of the people of this country and Commonwealth, and she did exactly that.

The Queen stands for something more than we are. She touched the lives of every single person in Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington. We have all lived in the Elizabethan age, whether we are six months or 70 years old. We all share the same values, and we have been honoured to live through a time that has linked our towns, our heritage, our histories and our families in the same feelings of love, joy and pride in a unique, wonderful woman. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

7.8 pm

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): I rise today to pay tribute myself and on behalf of my constituents. There have already been some very moving reflections from many Members, and I have felt it a privilege to be in the Chamber in the last couple of days, especially for the contributions from my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) and the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), whose charming personal anecdotes about the Queen exemplified the private charm of someone who lived their life in the full public view. Those stories captured the affection and personal touches of a graceful sovereign who humour and kind heart transcended generations, languages and continents like no one else.

Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), in his traditional style, rightly noted that the Queen's exemplary commitment to public service means that she will enter the annals of our history, and that of the world, as Elizabeth the Great. As the Prime Minister rightly remarked yesterday, the late Queen's spirit of public service will serve as a shining example to empower and inspire future generations, including her son as he takes on his immense new task as His Majesty King Charles III.

Her late Majesty did not just live by the principles and values of public service: the length, depth and breadth of her dutiful commitment, not only to the United Kingdom but to our realms across the seas, the Commonwealth and the world, made her into essentially a human embodiment of selfless public service.

Over the past few days, one quote from Ecclesiastes has returned to me again and again:

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven".

Throughout her life, as she grew with us, the Queen fulfilled many purposes as a constitutional monarch to passing generations: a friend, a mother, a grandmother and, in recent years, perhaps even a great-grandmother. Maybe we can find some purpose in her passing, too. Her late Majesty the Queen epitomised duty and public service, so much so that when we hear those words today, we see her and her example. She will be sorely missed, but she will never be forgotten. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

7.10 pm

Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): It is a privilege for me to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II today on behalf of the people of Crewe and Nantwich and surrounding villages. I did not have the honour of meeting the Queen, but in a testament to her decades of service and the diligent attention she paid to every corner of her realm, Her Majesty visited the area numerous times. In 1972, she opened Leighton Hospital. In 1987, she opened Crewe Heritage Centre and visited Crewe Works. In 1995, she was greeted by 200 south-west Cheshire scouts at Crewe train station, and in 2010, she visited Reaseheath College in Nantwich.

As others have said, a visit by the Queen—the handshakes, the conversations, even just distant glimpses—stay in people's memories. Leighton Hospital's longest-serving member of staff, Phil Malam, now aged 69, talked about the visit as part of the hospital's recent

50th anniversary celebrations. The visit took place just a few days after the then 19-year-old began working as a hospital porter. He wrote:

"It was a very special day...I remember we lined the corridor and the Queen spoke to quite a few of us as she walked past. She was really interested in what we did and thanked us—a lovely lady."

That is absolutely typical of how people describe interactions with the Queen: "She was really interested in what we did and thanked us." Over 70 years, I cannot even begin to imagine the number of conversations, handshakes, school and hospital openings, state occasions, visits by dignitaries and tours abroad—70 years of unwavering service to this country and her people, always interested, always smiling, always polite. In the age of celebrity, where to be famous is to be of interest to others, the most famous woman in the world was more interested in others. What drove her was a sense of duty and, as others have said, her wish to keep that promise that she made at just 21: to devote her life to our service. It was a promise solemnly made, and solemnly kept.

Why does that stir such strong sentiment in us? I think it is because we know our failings as humans are often rooted in self-interest of one kind or another: our desire to be important or admired, to achieve things, to be celebrated, to think mostly of ourselves and our family and friends. When someone extends the bonds of service to an entire nation, as the Queen did, to people she would never meet or know—when we see someone embodying the best of what it means to be human, the opposite of self-interest—that inspires us. It gives us a glimpse of what we are all capable of. That is why I admired the Queen.

But, as she embodied us, the millions who undertake acts of community and voluntary service embody her as well. The scout leader, the children's Sunday league football coach, the parkrun or marathon steward, the parish councillor, the Samaritans helpline volunteer, and the litter-pick group member all follow her example. Now I look at that final picture of her taken this week, and in retrospect, I think there was a deeper meaning to that final act of service than I realised at the time. Right at the end of her life, when perhaps for the rest of us our own comfort would come first, Her Majesty was once again absolutely determined to put her promise to us first—one last desire to help her people and her Prime Minister, entering another period of difficulty and uncertainty, to take that first step towards it with her yet again at our side. Now, rest in peace, Your Majesty. God save the King.

7.14 pm

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): It is an honour to offer my tribute to Her late Majesty, both on behalf of the constituents of South Norfolk and personally. I will not resile from anything our Scottish friends have said about Her Majesty's great love of Scotland, and it might not be a coincidence—it may have been by choice—that Her Majesty chose to spend her last days in the place she loved the most, but she also loved Norfolk. My hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (James Wild) spoke of Sandringham yesterday.

Soon after Her late Majesty's accession in 1952, she became patron of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, which hosts the Royal Norfolk show, one of England's premier agricultural events, in South Norfolk.

[Mr Richard Bacon]

The Queen attended the show in person in 1981 and again in 1986. His Majesty the King, as the Prince of Wales, has twice attended the Royal Norfolk show in the last two decades, and I was privileged as the local Member of Parliament to meet him on both occasions. Indeed, all the children of Her late Majesty have visited the Royal Norfolk show, as have other members of the royal family. We were delighted to welcome the Princess Royal just over two months ago.

Farmers and food producers across the county of Norfolk deeply appreciate the commitment of Her late Majesty and the wider royal family to food and farming over many decades, long before the words “food security” were even thought of. The Queen visited South Norfolk in February 2002 to open the headquarters of Norfolk Constabulary in Wymondham, and again in February 2004 to open the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

I particularly remember the Queen’s visit to the new police headquarters, when I was honoured to meet her. I was standing next to the chief constable in the receiving line. The then lord lieutenant, Sir Timothy Colman, introduced the Queen to the chief constable with the words, “Your chief constable, ma’am.” I suddenly reflected that he was, indeed, her chief constable, just as it was her Royal Navy, her courts and her civil service, and just as this Parliament sat under her authority with our Mace as its symbol. The system of constitutional monarchy that we have evolved is a pearl of great price precisely because it allows us to change. At the same time it offers constancy, as perfectly embodied in Her late Majesty.

On behalf of my constituents in South Norfolk, I thank Her late Majesty for all her extraordinary service. I offer my deepest condolences to the royal family and look forward with confidence and optimism to the new era before us. May the Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

7.17 pm

Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con): It is a privilege to hear the incredible tributes we have heard today.

Her Majesty touched the lives and hearts of everyone in Sevenoaks and Swanley. When I went to sign the book of condolence yesterday, it was full of incredible stories and tributes, but I thought I would reflect today on Her Majesty’s relationship with one of my more famous former constituents, and her first Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill. Describing Her Majesty on the day of her coronation, Sir Winston said she was “a Lady whom we respect because she is our Queen and whom we love because she is herself.”

I think that sentiment is shared across the House today.

Chartwell, Churchill’s country home for more than 40 years, is filled with his most cherished possessions. One photo stood out on my most recent trip there and it has been on my mind since Thursday evening, when we heard the statement from Buckingham Palace that we all dreaded. In Churchill’s bedroom, among many pictures of horses, is a framed photograph of Sir Winston on Buckingham Palace’s balcony on VE Day. He is standing next to the then King and Queen, and Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. The photograph is signed by all four members of the royal family and celebrates one of the most important moments of Churchill’s life and

career, as well as in the history of Britain. For Churchill to hang this picture on his bedroom wall, in his inner sanctum, shows just how important it was to him. The photo symbolises not only victory against tyranny but the vital role the royal family played in his wartime leadership and the strength of the relationship between Parliament and the Crown, a relationship that has never been more evident than in the past few days.

On behalf of everyone in Sevenoaks and Swanley, I say, “Thank you, ma’am, for everything. We owe you so much.” May she rest in peace. God save the King.

7.19 pm

Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott), who gave a warm and glowing tribute—we have heard many over the past 48 hours. There have been many anecdotes and many recurring themes. I am aware, Mr Speaker, of your guidance, and the guidance of Mr Deputy Speaker, on timing and repetition. It is on the latter that I fear I may have an issue, because I am speaking after my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart), who essentially gave the speech that I wanted to give, but better. I am grateful to him for remaining in his place, possibly to see what I come up with.

With the House’s indulgence, I will just share a personal reflection. It is a huge honour and genuine privilege to serve Her late Majesty the Queen in this place as a Member of Parliament, and as MP for Milton Keynes North, and an honour to pay tribute to our late Queen on behalf of its people. This summer, in her jubilee year, she bestowed city status on Milton Keynes, and that means so much to its people. People from outside Milton Keynes often say, “Well, what exactly does it mean to the people of Milton Keynes?” Indeed it is quite baffling and hard to explain. We got a letter, sent on Her late Majesty’s behalf, that does not quite explain what it means, but says at some length what it does not mean. In lieu of giving the speech I prepared, I thought I might read some of it:

“I am delighted to inform you that I was able to make a favourable recommendation for Milton Keynes to receive city status and that this has been approved by Her Majesty The Queen.

As you will know, this honour does not confer any additional functions, funding or powers nor does it confer upon the Mayor or Provost, the title of Lord Mayor or Lord Provost, the grant of this privilege being an entirely separate matter.

However, this is a rare honour granted by HM The Queen, and given the standard and number of applications was very high you should be very proud.”

We are so proud. Thank you, Your Majesty. It is an honour that goes well beyond any of the others listed in the letter. It is in our souls. I am proud to have served the Queen, and am proud to serve our new King. Long live the King.

7.22 pm

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): It is a privilege to pay tribute, on behalf of people in Dudley South, to our much-loved late monarch, Queen Elizabeth, and to offer our condolences to His Majesty the King, and to the royal family.

There is a poem popular at funerals that begins,

“Do not weep that I have gone,
but rejoice that I have been.”

It seems appropriate, for while we grieve for the loss of a beloved sovereign, we rejoice at all that she has given to us, our country, and the Commonwealth. Whether through providence or good fortune, we are blessed to have been granted such selfless service from one of the world's great leaders for so very long, but it is not just because of her longevity that she will surely be remembered, long after we are gone, as Elizabeth the Great, to use the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson).

Her late Majesty has guided our country since its rebuilding after the ravages of war, and since rationing was still in place, and saw it become a modern, 21st-century society. She took a disintegrating empire and created a strong Commonwealth family of nations. She was integral to our national identities, and embodied so much of what we like to think of as particularly British values and qualities. She united communities and helped to heal divisions between countries and Governments. Queen Elizabeth will be remembered for her contribution to every part of our national life, for she not only reigned over us but was there alongside us. She celebrated with us during times of national jubilation, and she provided comfort and constancy at times of great challenge. She met more people than possibly anybody else in history, and for all who met her, it was an experience that they never forgot.

Her late Majesty visited Brierley Hill, which is now part of my constituency, in 1957, not long after the start of her long reign. It was the first of three visits to Dudley borough and, 65 years later, people still have vivid memories of the day that the Queen came to town. More recently, as a student barrister, I was privileged to meet her during a training weekend at the Westminster estates, and I can only hope that the Prime Minister and other Ministers were more coherent when they were sworn into the Privy Council than I suspect I was on that day.

The Queen has been such a central part of our national life for so long that, even now, it is difficult to truly accept that she is gone. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, His Majesty the King and the royal family will always remain in our thoughts, in our prayers and in our hearts. God save the King.

7.25 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It is a great privilege, on behalf of myself, my family—my mum, as an adoring fan of the Queen and the royal family, would have been particularly proud—and my constituents, to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen and pay my respects to her family.

Sadly, we never truly appreciate what we have until it is gone and there is no finer illustration of that than the passing of Her Majesty the Queen. She has been such a constant presence that, throughout the inevitable peaks and valleys of life, it seemed she would always be there—a golden thread woven through each of our lives. She has, though, always been there for us, as strong and steadfast as her beloved highlands: seemingly faultless—I am sure she would argue with that—and infallible, but accepting, understanding and forgiving of fallibility.

The Queen was truly the best of us. She had an exceptional sense of public service, duty, responsibility and selflessness, combined with good humour, hope and optimism. She made us proud to be British, yet she

was always humble, unassuming and deeply interested in everything and everyone around her. It was never about her. The finest tribute and greatest legacy that we could ever give is to follow her lead to be better versions of ourselves—more selfless, more charitable, more optimistic, more forgiving and less judgmental—in her memory. Perhaps it is understandable that we did not fully appreciate what we had, so now let us appreciate what we have. God bless her and God save the King.

7.28 pm

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): I rise with sadness to send my condolences and those of my constituents to His Majesty the King and the entire royal family. It is an honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen today for all that she did for my community and the country.

Over the last few days, I have read many memories from the people of Teesside about the times they met her on her visits, like at Tees dock in 1997 or Pallister Park in 1993; the charities that she championed, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Scouts and the Girl Guides; and the horses that she raced at Redcar racecourse, where she twice won the Zetland Gold Cup. I never had the honour of meeting Her late Majesty, but I have a wonderful portrait of her in my office that was given to me by my mam, from when she visited Middlesbrough on her first visit to Teesside as Queen. It is a photograph of her in a car driving towards the ICI Wilton site on a warm summer day in June 1956, where she was met by chemists and industrialists who were at the forefront of British innovation in chemical processing. At 3 pm that day, the royal standard flew over the Wilton site as Her late Majesty was shown a range of products, from moulding powders and synthetic fibres to Perspex glasses. More than 60 years later, on that very same site, I remember gathering around a TV at 3 pm on Christmas day as my shift paused work briefly to watch her Christmas message. Much had changed in those decades on Wilton—indeed, much had changed in Britain—but there was one constant: a sovereign who, over seven decades, demonstrated the values of duty and public service. She was a remarkable woman who was an amazing mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and, as we have heard from others, a trusted counsellor, guide and friend.

The Queen's Christianity formed the guiding principles of her life and the example that she set. In St Paul's letter to the Galatians, he describes the “fruit of the Spirit” as

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”.

These are the words by which we knew our Queen. She was a monarch like no other, who gave everything for our country. As she said in her Christmas message in 1957:

“I cannot lead you into battle, I do not give you laws or administer justice but I can do something else, I can give you my heart and my devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations.”

That she did. She truly was Elizabeth the Great. God bless our late Queen. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

7.31 pm

Shaun Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Con): In forming my comments today, I thought it would be nigh on impossible to articulate what Her late Majesty the Queen

[Shaun Bailey]

meant to me and my constituents and to right hon. and hon. Members across the House, but as I have sat here today, it has been clear to me that her legacy has inspired us to be able to articulate exactly what she meant. For my constituents in the Black Country she was that continuity.

Her late Majesty visited the three towns I represent at various times. She visited Oldbury in 1957 as part of the Black Country tour that my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood) referred to; she visited Wednesbury in 1962—there is the incredible image of Her late Majesty waving to the crowds from Wednesbury town hall as they came to greet her—and she visited Tipton in 1994 as part of her final tour of the Black Country, which included sights such as Dudley castle.

For my constituents, Her late Majesty embodied continuity at a time of massive change. During that period, we saw slum clearances and we saw industries disappear, but new people were also welcomed into our community, and we saw our communities change for the better. We welcomed the diversity that the Black Country is so known for today, and we saw communities live side by side with one another. They embodied the example that she set, particularly with her work in the Commonwealth, in encouraging communities and peoples to come together to share the things that bind and unite us, and to live by that message.

That was embodied nowhere more than in the platinum jubilee celebrations, when I had the pleasure of joining so many different communities and street parties, particularly in Tipton, where people may have seen their Member of Parliament engaged in some sort of dodgy dancing. I cannot remember exactly how it went, but none the less it embodied the passion of those communities—my communities—for what Her late Majesty meant.

As we move forward out of this Elizabethan age into a new Carolean age, we need to ensure that the principles that Her late Majesty lived by are embodied further. As we look towards the reign of His Majesty the King, we look at the legacy that he, too, has—one of progress, protecting our environment, looking forward, focusing on technology, and bringing in new ways of working and new ways of viewing the world.

I mourn the loss of the Elizabethan age, but within that sadness there is hope as we look forward. I know that my communities—the great communities of the Black Country, who looked towards Her late Majesty with that sense of continuity and pride—will embrace His Majesty. Thank you, Ma'am, for everything that you did for the communities that you were so admired by. God save the King.

7.34 pm

Antony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con): It is both a privilege and a sadness to speak today, to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen—personally, on behalf of my family, and on behalf of my constituents in Burnley, Padiham and all the villages and parishes that make up our borough. Thursday was a day that we knew in our minds would come, but that we hoped in our hearts would not. The death of Her late Majesty the Queen was something that would happen one day, but never that day. On Thursday, that day came.

We will all have our own thoughts, feelings, emotions and memories of the Queen. It did not matter if you had never met her or you had met her many times; you felt close to her. We all knew her personally. She was part of our lives, and we knew her because we knew her ideals, values and sense of duty, and most of all her irrevocable, unwavering devotion and love for our country, and for all of us, which was always reciprocated. Her incredible impact on our lives and country meant that often we were able to forget just how important she was to us. In the last few days, we have remembered.

The realisation of just how much the Queen did to steer this great ship that is the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and the impact that she had on each of us, is what causes our grief and sorrow now. Through her many addresses to our nation, she was our guiding light. She asked us to focus on what was important when we needed focusing, she brought us cheer when we needed cheering up, she gave us hope and wisdom when we felt down, and she encouraged us to reflect when life got too busy and we struggled to find perspective. For most of us, she was the only monarch we had ever known.

During her reign, the Queen made three trips to my constituency. The first was in 1955, when she toured the nation as our new monarch. The second was in 1968, when she travelled through Padiham to visit St Peter's Church in Burnley. The third and most recent was in 2012 for the diamond jubilee. On each occasion, everyone came out. The Civic Trust, in a caption for one photo taken during the 1968 visit, described how

“a sea of faces and seemingly hundreds of waving Union Jacks greeted the Queen. The crowds were spilling on to the roadway, turning in Trafalgar Street and it was more than evident that Burnley was turning out in full force...there was only just sufficient road for the Royal motorcade to pass.”

Such was our affection and admiration for her, both as Queen and as Duke of Lancaster.

As we pledge ourselves and our unwavering loyalty to His Majesty the King, who we know will lead us just as ably, all that remains for me to say is: “Ma'am, thank you for all you did. May you rest in peace.” God save the King.

7.37 pm

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): I rise to speak on behalf of each and every one of my constituents across Keighley and Ilkley to pay tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II—someone who we all had so much affection and love for, and who we admired with the rest of the nation. My constituents and I share our deepest sorrow with that of the nation, and we of course send our deepest sympathy to our new sovereign, King Charles, and the remainder of the royal family.

Queen Elizabeth was a woman of great kindness and faith—an incredible inspiration to us all. Her dedication, devotion and commitment throughout her entire life—to public duty, to our great nation, and to the Commonwealth—was unparalleled. Her Majesty provided us all with great stability and reassurance, and she carried out her reign with enormous amounts of love coupled with incredible humility—love that was there for us all.

The reality is that we have all grown up knowing nothing else but the Queen being there, at the very heart and soul of our nation. We welcomed her into our homes every Christmas, as we watched her give her

annual Christmas address, and we looked to her for leadership and resilience through some of the darker moments in our nation's history. We celebrated her, and with her, at national events. Only earlier this year, we all came together as a country to celebrate her marvellous 70-year platinum jubilee. Street parties were held across my constituency, as well as church services, and school children designed and drew posters of Her Majesty. The strength of feeling for her was huge. It is no wonder that we all felt that we knew the Queen and had a personal relationship with her; and that we had a personal understanding of what she was all about, and what she stood for—decency.

I never met the Queen, but I will never forget, when I came to this place as a new Member of Parliament, leaving this Chamber for the state opening of Parliament and walking down to the other place. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up and I had goosebumps, because I could see a glimpse of Her Majesty sitting on the throne. That is a moment I will always cherish.

The sense of loss has been strong, as we have seen in the presence of those standing outside Buckingham Palace. For decades, her Majesty has been a cool-headed, constant steward of our great nation; she has been our nation's soul. I simply say, on behalf of each and every one of my constituents across Keighley and Ilkley, "Thank you for your service, your Majesty. May you rest in peace and rise in glory." God save the King.

7.41 pm

Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con): It is with some humility that I speak today on behalf of people and communities across the Bolsover constituency. I place on record our thanks to Her late Majesty for all that she did for our nation, and our sincerest condolences to the royal family, who are very much in our thoughts and prayers.

The words:

"Grief is the price we pay for love"

have been often quoted over the past two days and, boy, did we love her. We saw how much we loved her in the platinum jubilee celebrations earlier this year. That was the greatest weekend of my life; it was the greatest honour to tour the constituency. I grew up with a father who told me stories about playing with his band at the 1977 silver jubilee celebrations. Although his rockstar status has gone and he is now a financial adviser, those stories have stayed with me. I saw the unity that Her Majesty could bring. In a deeply cynical world, where we are encouraged to find differences with each other, that weekend managed to bring us together; perhaps it will be the final time the nation felt so together.

Thursday was a day that few of us will forget, and we will all know where we were at that moment. Many of us gathered in Strangers downstairs. Members of all parties and House staff were there, and we waited with tremendous anticipation and sadness. We were all very emotional; even some of the journalists who were present seemed to have emotions. As the news was broadcast on the television, there were tears everywhere. The image that stays with me is of the Doorkeepers and their tear-stained eyes. Many of them represented our country and Her Majesty in our armed forces, and I saw the sadness reflected in them. I thank the House staff for all they have done to ensure we are able to sit today, and for everything that is going on at this moment. It is incredibly important to remember what they have done.

That moment will live with us for the rest of time. It has been suggested that one or two hon. Members may have made similar points or repeated what has already been said, but if we were to see a word cloud of what has been spoken about today, perhaps the most important word would be "duty". We in this House are public servants, and the first official thing we do is to swear an oath to the sovereign. We are servants of the people we represent in our constituency, but we pale in comparison with the duty that Her Majesty provided to this land. Her duty helped to unify us, to humble us, to remind us of greater times when things were difficult, and to encourage us. Her Majesty will never be replaced in our hearts, but in a way, she will live on forever. God save the King.

7.45 pm

Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con): It is an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Stockton South to offer our deepest condolences to the royal family and to pay tribute to our longest-serving and greatest monarch. Since 1952, our nation has changed beyond all recognition. The people of 1952 would recognise little of modern society, with the exception of one thing: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. For 70 years, our gracious sovereign lady has provided stability, continuity and a sense of reassurance to millions across this nation and to billions across the world.

The Queen has a special place in the hearts of the people of Stockton. During the jubilee weekend, we saw communities come together with huge celebrations in my part of the world. Many shared their stories of the Queen's visits to Stockton in 1956, 1977 and, most recently, 2012, when she opened our white water course.

The Queen was a lady of small stature but huge personality and presence. She was someone every world leader wanted to be seen with, including 15 Prime Ministers, 14 Presidents of the United States and many other leaders. She saw them come and she saw them go. While they were able to step down, walk away and retire, Her Majesty never had such a luxury. The vow she made in 1947 to dedicate her whole life to service was as true then as it was at the end. Her Majesty showed that age is but a number.

For me, the Queen was basically Britannia—a titan in her own right, a proud defender of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and our true strength and stay. Not only did she see her nation engage in combat over the seven decades of her reign but she herself saw active service in world war two. That image of Her Majesty behind the wheel of a wagon in her uniform is one that can make us only proud—proud of her and proud to be British.

Today, in every city, every town, every village and every street of our nation, we all mourn the loss of our Queen, our guiding light, our nation's rock—the best of Britain. We must never forget the incredible example Her Majesty set. On behalf of the people of Stockton South, I offer her our thanks for her incredible life of service. God bless Her Majesty. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

7.48 pm

Robert Largan (High Peak) (Con): When I was 20 years old, my grandma suddenly fell very seriously ill. She was undergoing emergency surgery and we all knew

[Robert Largan]

that the chances of survival were very slim. I vividly remember that long day, waiting for the bad news. On Thursday, as the country collectively held its breath, waiting for word from Balmoral, I found myself thinking of my grandma and that long day all those years ago. That is because, for many, many reasons, Her Majesty was a grandmother to the entire nation. She was a constant in all our lives—that familiar, smiling, reassuring and comforting presence.

I never had an audience with the Queen; I do not have any moving or amusing anecdotes to share. Many other hon. Members who are far more eloquent than I have already set out at great length her many remarkable qualities, and I will not repeat them to the House. I will simply say that we are all diminished by her loss, yet her memory is our blessing. On behalf of the people of High Peak, I want to set on record our deep-felt gratitude and love for our late sovereign, to express our heartfelt condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and to affirm that we remain his most loyal subjects. May Her Majesty rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

7.49 pm

Anna Firth (Southend West) (Con): The city of Southend and Leigh-on-Sea also wish to pay tribute to Her Majesty the late Queen Elizabeth II—quite simply one of the most exceptional women the world has ever known. As one constituent put it to me, she was the best sequel we could ever have hoped for.

Like many, I never had the opportunity to meet Her Majesty, but my father-in-law shared with me a lovely story. He was part of the battle management group for the first Gulf war and was hosting the Queen in High Wycombe, where they were in constant communication with the frontline. Walking down the desks, the Queen stopped to look over the shoulder of one of the operators to ask what he was doing, and she was amused to see written on the screen, “Sorry, Jim, got to go. Queen just arrived.” Just imagine his horror when the next message that appeared on his screen was, “P... off. Pull the other one.” The Queen did not miss a beat. Chuckling away, she said, “Tell your friend Jim that I’m here and I wish him the very best of luck.” Does that not sum up the Queen for us? There she was with our troops—even though at a distance—in their hour of need, and she always saw the fun and always saw the best in everyone. She saw instantly that at the other end of the line was someone who nobody knew, but who was putting their life at risk for the rest of us, and her priority was to say thank you and wish him luck.

As well as 15 Prime Ministers, 14 US Presidents and seven Popes, the Queen saw four Members of Parliament for Southend West. When she ascended the throne, Chips Channon was our local MP. He described her as “regal and quite perfect”. My predecessor, Sir David, was knighted by the Queen at Windsor castle. He described it as the best day of his life.

In 1999, in carnival red, the Queen lit up our seafront, delighting thousands by walking the entire golden mile with Philip beside her. But, with characteristic interest in sound finances, she also insisted on visiting our local Customs and Excise office. Of course, earlier this year she granted Southend city status, for which we are eternally grateful.

But it is the Queen’s values that I most want to give thanks for tonight, and they are perfectly summed up by the words she chose to speak at the end of her coronation day, in the penultimate devotional prayer. It is very short:

“Lord...Thou hast filled my cup with thy goodness to overflowing. With a humble spirit and a thankful heart, I commit myself to thy care and will lay me down in peace and take my rest.”

On behalf of everyone in Southend, I say, rest now, Your Majesty, in eternal peace. God save the King.

7.53 pm

Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con): It is my sad duty to convey on behalf of the constituents of Aberconwy our deepest condolences to His Majesty and the royal family, but it is a privilege to express our gratitude for the life of Her late Majesty. To King Charles, the new Prince and Princess of Wales, and their families, we offer every prayer and good wish in the important roles they will play in the days and years ahead.

I will not restate the many tributes paid in this place to Her late Majesty—about her character, the impact of her service, and the affection that was felt for her in all parts of her realm. Aberconwy is no exception in that. She visited on many occasions, including the National Eisteddfod in 1963, on her silver jubilee tour and—notably for this engineer—to open the Conwy tunnel in 1991. It will be no surprise that her recent platinum jubilee was marked across Aberconwy with enthusiasm, with many events and street parties and with much good cheer. The sun shone and the rain fell, but, whether it was dog shows and damp bunting or coffee, cake and coronation chicken sandwiches, communities were united. They were open-armed in celebration and appreciation of her seven decades of service. Today, those communities are united in mourning, and it is books of condolence that are open across the constituency. Yesterday, as I drove to the station, in one village I saw that a simple bouquet of fresh flowers had been laid out. That quiet, personal gesture of grief has no doubt been repeated countless times and in countless ways across the land.

I did not have the honour of welcoming Her late Majesty to Aberconwy. I do not have a story to share. Like so many, mine was the simple privilege of being her loyal subject; a beneficiary of her lifetime of public service. We had this in common, however: professing a Christian faith. When the Christian’s course is run, our fond hope and great expectation is to be welcomed by our heavenly father with the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I cannot think of a higher tribute or a greater reward for Her late Majesty. May she rest in peace, and may God save the King.

7.56 pm

Darren Henry (Broxtowe) (Con): I echo the sentiments of many right hon and hon. Members. It is always a special moment when all parties in the Chamber unite together and speak with one voice. Unifying those who were divided was just one of the countless qualities that made our Queen the ruler she was. My thoughts and those of my constituents in Broxtowe are with the royal family at this time. The Queen was loved and admired not only throughout Great Britain but across the Commonwealth. A sense of loss and mourning will be felt in all corners of the world.

On a personal note, on more than one occasion in my life, I swore true allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. The first was in 1987, at the age of 18, when I was joining the armed forces, and I did so more recently, in 2019, when being sworn in as a Member of this House. On those occasions, I felt incredibly proud to be able to serve my country and, most importantly, the Queen. I was honoured to be invited to meet Her late Majesty while serving in the Royal Air Force. She smiled and shook my hand. It was one of the privileges of my life and a memory that I will always hold dear. No matter who you were, her smile put you instantly at ease; the rarest and most wonderful quality for anyone to hold.

As has been mentioned by right hon. and hon. Members, in 1947 the Queen stated:

“I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.”

She came to embody those words throughout her 70 years of service and displayed a sense of duty to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth unlike any seen before. Over the last 70 years, at times of struggle and loss, we as a nation always looked to the Queen. She gave comfort in times of sorrow, continuity in times of uncertainty and hope in times of doubt. During the pandemic, when many of us were separated from our loved ones, she reminded our nation that “we will meet again.” She embodied the strength that we needed and inspired us all to carry on.

I offer wishes of success and prosperity to our new King, Charles III. The country and the Commonwealth are behind you and with you. On behalf of myself and my constituents in Broxtowe, may the Queen rest in peace, and God save the King.

7.59 pm

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): I rise with profound reverence to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen. Ours is not to reason why, but this is the moment we feared would come. The loss of this most adored global icon, the bedrock in our lives for so long, is deep, palpable and impossible to put into words.

We have heard many superlatives. Perhaps uniquely, all of these are perfect, as she was magnificent, steadfast and inspirational, a devoted mother and simply the best. But the two words that I want to focus on are service and love. When she went up a princess and came down a queen at Treetops in 1952, she was aware of the service that lay ahead, not only as Head of State and of the Commonwealth, but as head of the armed forces. She had already become colonel-in-chief of the Grenadier Guards at the age of 16, and the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force would soon bear her standard. It is impossible not to mention, too, the Household Division, the Royal Engineers and so many of the other Army units for whom she was also one of their own. I cannot think of a single person to whom that famous mantra of “serve to lead” could be more perfectly applied. Her sailors, soldiers and aviators truly loved her, and rightly so.

Having led soldiers myself on several operational tours, I can tell the House from experience that servicemen and women do not proudly serve their country or even pay the ultimate sacrifice because the prevailing Government ask it of them—nor do they do it to follow orders, or out of camaraderie or even a sense of glory—but because of service to the Crown. The glue that actually binds

military service at sea, on land and in the air is the democracy, freedom and sovereignty of this great nation and the monarch who presides over it.

In my constituency of Bracknell, the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst proudly occupies its leafy corner of Berkshire. Three times a year, the Queen or her representative would come to her sovereign’s parade, where officer cadets commission into the Army. I can recall my own commissioning in 1992 as if it was yesterday, and the Queen was always a regular feature, smiling in the achievements of others. And who could forget that fine day in 2006 when she attended Prince William’s commissioning parade alongside her beloved Prince Philip—and King Charles, the Queen Consort and, of course, Cadet Prince Harry Wales? The famous painting from that day still hangs imposingly above the famous steps at Old College.

Beyond Sandhurst, Her Majesty has a wider association with the people of Bracknell. Most recently, she opened the Lexicon shopping centre in 2018, and visited Wellington College in 2009, the Transport Research Laboratory in 1995, the Victuallers’ School in 1994 and the Look Out centre in 1991. In fact, she formally visited my constituency from neighbouring Windsor on at least 20 other occasions during her life. To be in no doubt, Queen Elizabeth II loved her country, the Commonwealth, her family, her people and all those who came into contact with her. She was also loved by them, and the people of Bracknell will always be proud to have known her.

I visited the Lexicon in Bracknell yesterday to sign the book of condolence, near to where she had opened it four years earlier. I spoke to constituents who were saddened by her passing. Some I met were visibly overcome by grief and loss, uncertain for their own future. And, Mr Speaker, do you know what? It is okay not to feel okay at this profound time. It is okay to mourn her passing, as well as celebrate her life. It is okay to feel a sense of foreboding, and it is okay to feel wretched, as the Queen was very special.

I want to finish by saying one thing above all else, on behalf of the good people of Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst, Wokingham Without and beyond: Your Majesty, thank you. God save the King.

8.3 pm

Jill Mortimer (Hartlepool) (Con): It is indeed a great honour, but also with great sorrow, that I stand in this place today on behalf of the people of Hartlepool to express our profound sadness at the passing of our most Gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II.

The Queen was many things—a Head of State; a leader; a mother of realms and of heirs; a daughter of history and humanity. She was also a warm, humorous and understanding countrywoman, a lover of horses and dogs—passions and interests that I share with Her late Majesty. In the equestrian and dog-loving community, when the sad but inevitable time comes when we must say goodbye to a much loved four-legged companion, we always want that to be at a time of their choosing, at the end of a good summer, in their favourite meadow or basket by the fire. It is also a passing that we wish for ourselves.

In my sadness at hearing the news of the Queen’s passing, I also drew solace from knowing that she had left this earthly dominion at the end of a glorious summer, before the cold winter starts to bite, in a

[Jill Mortimer]

favourite place of her own—a castle of happy memories. No one will forget that last public image of her fulfilling her final duty, smiling in her kilt and cardigan, trusty handbag over her arm—perhaps containing a marmalade sandwich—a countrywoman by her fire.

Throughout history we have heard of the great moments of monarchy being accompanied by celestial events, such as Edward IV's sun in splendour, the appearance of three suns rising in the sky before the battle of Mortimer's Cross. He was father to Elizabeth of York, grandmother of Elizabeth I, the rainbow Queen who presided over a golden age. How fitting that at the time of the announcement of the passing of our great and noble Queen Elizabeth II—daughter of another Elizabeth of York—rainbows appeared in the sky over her palaces: the two Elizabethan ages entwined through time, proclaiming the new dawn of the reign of King Charles III. As he pledged to continue the same duty as his mother before him, so shall we all in this place swear a new oath of allegiance to him.

May Elizabeth of blessed memory rest in peace. God save the King.

8.6 pm

Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Ind): I rise with both immense sadness and immense gratitude at being able to contribute to this series of tributes to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, both on my own behalf and on behalf of the people of Delyn, who have been delighted to welcome her on visits to the constituency many times over the years. It is an honour to be able to follow such outstanding speeches as those that we have heard over the past two days.

Nothing can measure the impact of a person more effectively than the way we feel when they pass away. We feel unimaginable grief at the passing of a parent, a close family member or a lifelong friend, and it is astonishing to think that people experience those same feelings at the passing of someone whom—like me—they probably never met. Such was the impact of Her late Majesty.

She was the epitome of discretion, humility and grace, and while we were honoured to have her as our Head of State for so long, in truth I believe she felt that the honour was hers in being afforded the privilege of being our Queen; for hers was a life of duty, of sacrifice, and of diligent responsibility to be that beacon that we all looked towards in the most challenging times.

She never took that duty lightly or casually—the omnipresent figure that bound us all together, providing a link to times gone by and to those people we have sadly lost along the way. People have said many times, “We shall never see her like again.” I really hope we do, because we all need that figurehead, that shining light, that ubiquitous inspiration for us to do all that we can in the service of others.

One of my old teachers told me a while ago, “If someone has already said it perfectly, do not be so arrogant as to assume that you can do it better.” So I will quote the words of the poet David Harkins:

“You can shed tears that she is gone

Or you can smile because she has lived

You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back

Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her

Or you can be full of the love that you shared

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday

Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday

You can remember her and only that she is gone

Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back

Or you can do what she would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.”

Our grief is palpable, the void in our lives both unexpected and painful, and we mourn her loss. May she rest well, reunited with her beloved husband. God save the new Prince and Princess of Wales, and God save the King.

8.9 pm

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): Many colleagues have said that they will always remember where they were when the news broke of Her late Majesty's death. I certainly will: I was standing by a football pitch in Nottinghamshire watching the under-sixes. I had been let off for the day because the Tour of Britain was passing through my constituency. As the deluge—and it was a deluge—cleared, and as the news of Her late Majesty's passing rippled around the parents on the side of the pitch, a rainbow appeared in the sky, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) said. It was an incredible moment as that emotion rippled around the assembled parents, and I subsequently watched it rippling around this Chamber on television.

I am not sure what more I can say at the end of two days of tributes to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. There have been so many wonderful contributions, particularly from those senior colleagues and Privy Counsellors who knew her and spent time with her. Their personal stories and anecdotes spoke to her charm, her character, her humour and—as we heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May)—her firm commitment to the three-second rule.

Although so much has been said already, I have felt duty-bound to speak on behalf of my constituents in Mansfield and lay a floral tribute at the palace on their behalf. As a Nottinghamshire county councillor, I also have a civic role in some of the many events this week. The proclamation tomorrow and the memorial events throughout the week and next weekend will be an important chance for the public, who are mourning her loss as if she were part of their own family, to do what we are doing now: coming together to share stories and memories and be part of the transition from one era to the next.

We have been lucky enough to host Her late Majesty in Mansfield. Admittedly, it was in the 1970s, so I must admit that I did not quite manage to get there myself, but the town still celebrates and remembers her coming to open Mansfield library all those years ago. She opened the Queen's Medical Centre, too, and made at least six visits to Nottingham throughout her reign, most recently for the diamond jubilee. For everyone who saw her or met her on those visits, the occasion will be among their most treasured memories.

In many ways, Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth was the one constant in our lives through so much change and chaos. She has played a huge role in all our lives. I was struck by her love for her family, not least in how

she wrapped her arms around her grandchildren in 1997 after the death of Princess Diana, and how she shouldered that grief and those burdens while protecting them, even at what was perhaps the most difficult time for our monarchy during her reign.

The end of one era is also the start of another, and King Charles III now shoulders that responsibility. My heart goes out to him and his family as they seek to provide stability and continuity while dealing with their private grief in the eye of so much public interest. I hope that the heartfelt sadness and the outpouring of affection from the public, here and around the globe, gives him heart and gives him strength.

Earlier this year, I was lucky enough to meet the King, who was then the Prince of Wales. We discussed his charity work and how good housing can help to tackle inequalities. He was warm, energetic and incredibly knowledgeable, as we have heard today among the recollections of the Queen. I know and trust that he will continue with the same sense of duty and public service that he learned from Her late Majesty over so many years. I hope that she is reunited with Philip, and that she may rest in peace. God save the King.

8.12 pm

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con): I rise with a heavy heart tonight to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. I want to start by expressing my deepest sympathies to His Majesty the King and the entire royal family, on behalf of my family and the loyal constituents of Wealden. Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was loved and respected throughout my constituency, from the villages of Withyham and Eridge in the north to the town of Hailsham in the south. She was adored for her duty, loyalty and leadership in the UK, the Commonwealth and across the world.

I want to share the words of a constituent who lives in Fletching. Libby Buchanan is 99 years old and has lived through the reigns of five monarchs, from George V to King Charles III. She said to me how deeply blessed she felt to have lived through the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sometimes, Libby told me, the changes experienced in the world over the Queen's reign were bewildering, yet the Queen never changed. She was always there, a constant, gentle and ever-present light. That light has now gone out but, as Libby said, the flame has been relit and is held in the safest possible hands: those of King Charles III. Long live the King.

8.14 pm

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): Her Majesty the Queen was the heart of Windsor, and it is in some ways fitting that my words will be the last of the Back-Bench tributes to Her Majesty. I wish to pass on condolences not just from me but from my many constituents to the royal family.

The Queen was an exceptional monarch through an extraordinary era. Even before her coronation, the young Elizabeth made a vow to devote her life to serving her country. She kept her promise, and she surpassed our expectations. She has been the constant in an ever-changing world not just for Windsor, but for the country, the Commonwealth, and in the hearts and minds of all those around the world. She has been the embodiment of the United Kingdom. She has been projecting all that is good about our nation across the globe for more than 70 years, and her image is our image to the world.

She was the omnipresent Queen. I have been listening to the tributes in this debate, and it seems as though the Queen has been to every part of our United Kingdom. Everybody has a story to tell and everyone in this Chamber has a story to tell. I can tell the House that, as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to parts of west Africa, everybody there has a story to tell as well. Everyone has a story to tell about our omnipresent Queen. Nationally and internationally, she is recognised.

Yet amid all her duties, responsibilities and commitments, the Queen remained ever-present in the Windsor constituency, one of her favourite homes. People felt her presence everywhere across the constituency—absolutely everywhere. As the MP, I have had the privilege of greeting Heads of State as they arrived in Windsor, albeit in the shadows of Her Majesty, and I could witness at first hand her incisive wit and her cool and calm humour, which set guests at their ease. Aside from seeing the Queen at Royal Ascot, the Savill garden, the Combermere barracks and the Victoria barracks, or at military parades, virtually every constituent will have seen or met her, or knew somebody very close to them who had.

If people lived in Windsor, there was no escape—none whatsoever. If they were strolling in Windsor Great park, they would inevitably bump into the Queen walking, driving or, in the past, on a horse. Their children were likely to see her at school or at college, and for anyone working for our many charities and good causes, it was inevitable that they would receive visits and great patronage from the Queen. When it came to our businesses, if the foundation stone of the building was not laid by the Queen, a plaque with her name was placed there on her opening it, or the business received a letter or an invite to the Castle. Whether people knew it or not, even when they were shopping in the King Edward Court centre in central Windsor, it was inevitable that they would bump into Her Majesty on occasion. She was everywhere: she was truly omnipresent. So I am not surprised—I am not—that her last official engagement was at the Thames hospice in our local area. It makes sense in so many ways.

In closing, it is difficult for me to express just how much the Queen will be missed in Windsor and how thankful we are to have known her. She was our omnipresent Queen—the Queen of constancy—and her image is our image to the world. In future, in this place and across the country, we must strive to live up to her image of us. In Windsor the Queen will live on in our parks, lakes and buildings, and in our memories. She will live on in her eldest son, and I say without hesitation, long live King Charles III.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Leader of the House.

8.18 pm

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): First, it is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie), and I had a feeling he would have more anecdotes than I do.

It is truly an honour to close these two days of tributes to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I have heard almost all of them either here or in my office, and truly every speech has been superb. I am so proud of how we, her Parliament, have come together to pay tribute, and I really think we have done her proud.

[Thangam Debbonaire]

Colleagues have sent condolences to the royal family on behalf of their constituents, and on behalf of the people of Bristol West and my own family, I do so, too.

From the opening speeches by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, followed by the Father and the Mother of the House, to those of the Members here now and the hundreds in between, I am grateful to each and every colleague, as I also am to the Clerks, Doorkeepers and staff who have enabled this to happen. I truly thank everyone. It is impossible to do the normal round-up closing speech, so I will try to pick out themes instead, because we have explored so many of service and of faith. We have had poetry and prose, and quite a lot of comedy. There have been perspectives from history and of progress. I am aware—I hope I have my dates right—that Her late Majesty's first Prime Minister was born in 1874 and her last in 1975. What a span of historical perspective.

Many spoke wittily of their own time with the late Queen, to illustrate her character. To pick one out, who knew that the tale of a plate of cheese delivered with a wry raised eyebrow by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), could evoke the Queen so well? We have heard many stories of mishaps on footstools, some of them with Her late Majesty saving people's dignity, but some of them just managing to turn it into a comedy moment.

The Mother of the House and many others spoke of the significance of the late Queen as a female leader and role model. Indeed, in her Christmas broadcast in 1966, the Queen said that

"it has been women who have breathed gentleness and care into the harsh progress of mankind."

I have thought about that remark a lot in the past couple of days.

Some colleagues spoke eloquently of their time with the late Queen in other countries—the greatest diplomat on the world stage in our corner, representing Britain—and many talked about her close bond and relationships with our armed forces and others in uniform. We have toured all the nations and every region—it seems like every village, town and city—and felt the sense of pride that she had in all of this country and all of us in it, where she shook more hands, unveiled more plaques and gifted more smiles than anywhere else.

I have learned a great deal more about how a constitutional monarchy operates from those who interacted with Her late Majesty in governmental office, and of her kindness to those whose governmental career had ended. Ardent monarchists and those with a different view alike expressed huge respect for her dedication to public service. Her ability to transcend politics and to represent the national mood meant that she was a unifying figure through which the public could share our nation's joys and bring much-needed comfort in our country's darkest hours. I feel that today we have transcended politics and come together.

Many speakers mentioned the late Queen's pitch-perfect television statements during the pandemic, which so movingly connected our collective trauma in those fearful months in 2020 with the anguish instilled in the world war two generation. Remembering her invocation of Vera Lynn's wartime message, "We'll meet again" brings a lump to my throat—so poignant—but she also said:

"the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling still characterise this country. The pride in who we are is not a part of our past, it defines our present and our future."

Many spoke of how, aged just 21, the then Princess Elizabeth declared that her whole life, whether it be long or short, should be devoted to our service. That was a promise she fulfilled right until the very end. Grief, as Her late Majesty said, is the price we pay for love, but who would want to live without love? We suffer that grief willingly. Whatever the age at which our loved ones leave us, whether their life was long or short, we always grieve for that lost presence—the years we are robbed of. We yearn for just one more week, one more day, just one more hour with them. Knowing how that feels, and knowing that the royal family must be feeling that right now, even in the midst of all the formalities and the public duties, we keep them in our hearts.

I hope that, by reflecting together on the Queen's life over the past two days, we can appreciate the concept of a life well lived. Whether you are a brownie or an MP, whether you work in the NHS or in education, whether you were a key worker or a volunteer during the pandemic, whether you work in hospitality or a factory, whether you are simply a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a friend or a neighbour, each day brings all of us a new opportunity to live up to the ideal set by the late Queen's life well lived. That is perhaps the biggest tribute we can pay to the ultimate public servant, conscious as we go about our lives of how we can help one another, contribute to the common good and work toward an even better Britain. In the doing of duty and service, we sometimes think of sacrifice, but in the tributes offered here we can all recognise that, in fact, these make a good life. We MPs, who willingly chose our life of duty and service, can renew our commitment to them now as we celebrate the one who, though that life was thrust upon her, followed it unstintingly for 70 years. We must carry forward this Elizabethan legacy of public service for generations to come, for this truly is patriotism.

May Her late Majesty rest in peace and the legacy of the great Elizabethan age continue. May His Majesty King Charles III have a long and successful reign. Long live the King.

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

8.24 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Penny Mordaunt):

It is an honour to bring to a close the tributes paid to her most Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I speak today as Leader of the House of Commons, but also for the people of Portsmouth, a city she visited not just for fleet reviews, civic events, homecomings, or ship commissioning, but in transit to board her beloved Royal Yacht Britannia. In all cases, the people of my city remember her connection to and understanding of the tools of UK sea power, our sailors, our civilians, their families, our dockyard and our warships. For a time, that was her life, too: she had worn a uniform; she was a naval wife. She understood service and sacrifice and the burdens people carried. That empathy was evident in all that she did. It was no surprise to hear so many tributes from hon. and right hon. Members full of examples of that personal kindness, or of her concern

and care for the staff of this estate, including her desire for the Vice-Chamberlain's weekly notes to keep her up to speed on the gossip.

The Queen was our Polaris, but she was not a distant Queen. She took an interest in us all, because she recognised the burden of service. Her reign began with a very public grief, because she could not mourn her father in private. She loved Balmoral not just for its beauty and peace, but because she got to sleep in the same bed for a whole six weeks. Of all the exceptional things that she did, of all the people and places that she experienced, her rare night of normality, of freedom, out with her sister to celebrate victory in Europe was, in her words, "one of the most memorable". For me, the fact that she met her new Prime Minister in person and prepared to take a Privy Council 24 hours before her death illustrates the depth of her devotion to duty.

The Queen lived and died in the service of the nation, as her father and his father before him did. In the final analysis, this then is the measure of all greatness. It is not weighed by gain, but in loss. Sacrifice is the ultimate test of faith and duty. All that is yours must be laid down for all that is us. All that is they must be laid down for all that is we. For only those that bear this cross can wear the crown, because crowns are not made just of jewels and precious metals; they are mostly made of love.

Speaking after 9/11, the Queen comforted us and the rest of the world by saying that grief was the price of love. Her words should comfort us still. We may now feel lost and uncertain, just like some may have felt 70 years ago when she vowed that her life would be dedicated to us. If only they had known what a life she would lead, what glories and hope and vision she would bestow. They need not have worried, and nor should we now. Like his mother's grief at her father's death, His Majesty's grief, too, will not be a private one. He will lead us in mourning. He also carries the cross—a cross of sacrifice and service.

Our great Queen has entrusted us all with a living legacy of triumph over tribulation, of cheerfulness over challenge, and of dedication and determination. She has left us, but her values remain with us. Her example compels us to continued fidelity to our King and our country. God save the King.

Business without Debate

Resolved, nemine contradicente,

That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty to convey to His Majesty the deep sympathy felt by this House for the great sorrow which he has sustained by the death of the late Queen, His

Majesty's mother; to extend to all the Royal Family the deep sympathy of this House in their grief, which is shared by all its Members; to assure His Majesty that Her late Majesty's unstinting dedication over a reign of over seventy years to the service of our great country and its people, and to the service of the countries and peoples of the rest of the wider Commonwealth, will always be held in affectionate and grateful remembrance; and to express to His Majesty our loyalty to him and our conviction that he will strive to uphold the liberties and to promote the happiness of the people in all his realms now and in the years to come.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS

Ordered,

That the Address be presented to His Majesty by the whole House.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

ADJOURNMENT

Ordered,

That, at its rising this day, the House shall adjourn to a day and time to be set by Mr Speaker in consultation with His Majesty's Ministers, and the provisions of paragraphs (2) and (3) of Standing Order No. 13 (Earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances) shall apply in relation to the day on which the House shall so meet.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

Mr Speaker: Before we come to the Adjournment, I want to remind Members that, at 6 o'clock tomorrow at St Margaret's, we will be holding our own church service. I hope that many Members and staff will be able to join us at that event.

May I just say that this has been an amazing tribute? As I said yesterday, when the House comes together, it comes together in a very special way, and there has been none more special than these last two days. There were 138 contributions today, making a total of 321 contributions. Personally, I have been moved and amazed by the way that everybody has contributed, with all being able to talk about their own little part of their lives that had been played in Her Majesty. It is moving for me, as mine must be one of the few constituencies that the Queen never visited, but there we are.

That is all I want to say, and thank you once again to all the staff of this House, all the security and everybody who has made this work. It really is appreciated, and thank you to all.

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Craig Whittaker.*)

8.33 pm

House adjourned.

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Volume 719
No. 46

Saturday
10 September 2022

CONTENTS

Saturday 10 September 2022

Tributes to Her Late Majesty the Queen [Col. 655]

Motion for an Humble Address [Col. 765]
