

# Happy and Glorious for 70 Years

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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This year's Platinum Jubilee is our shared recognition of The Queen's enduring reign. She has been the national and local focus of civil, military and voluntary service. My hope is that she enjoys it as much as we do in communities throughout her United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Children at East Preston Junior School started my week. Their jubilee plates and their impressive knowledge of her life cheered me. On Tuesday at the Heene Community Centre's Chat Room, I reminisced with the range of people enjoying the informal gathering.

The weekly group was introduced by Sharon and Gerry Crest. People of all ages help each other to combat loneliness. During the Covid lockdowns, some, especially many elderly, were at times distressed and isolated. The greatest impact was perhaps for the person whose spouse, partner, friend or elderly parent had recently died.

The Chat Room welcomes everyone. Bring a coffee or tea from the café, take a seat, then listen and talk. Issues we discussed included how family doctors try to serve all patients with face-to-face appointments and telephone consultations, together with the importance of hospital clinicians understanding the often-complex needs of individual patients.

We talked about how leaseholders could gain useful advice and we discussed how other faiths could learn from the self-help experience of the Jewish community's CST. The Community Security Trust (CST) is a UK-based charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism and related threats. CST received charitable status in 1994. It is recognised by the Police and Government as a model of best practice. CST works across the Jewish community, religious and secular, young to old, across the political spectrum and throughout the whole of the UK.

CST works with Members of Parliament, discussing antisemitism, racism, extremism and terrorism. Building better relations across communities is key to reducing prejudice and bigotry of all forms. They give security advice to Hindu Temples, Sikh Gurdwaras, Churches and Mosques around the UK, and helped create Tell MAMA, the Muslim community initiative to measure and combat anti-Muslim hate crimes.

I remembered that when someone attacked the Worthing Mosque, local churches offered to stand outside in solidarity during Friday prayers. Around that time, I organised a simple supper with representatives of most faiths and of none. Each of us brought a short reading or prayer that could be read by any of us. Allocated randomly, we started the shared meal with these readings. It was a moving evening of shared feeling and of fun.

Those fortunate to attend a Royal Garden Party can talk with any other of the Queen's 8,000 other invitees about shared community service. There will be representatives from each Commonwealth nation, from every element of the armed forces, from each faith and from a great variety of local or national voluntary bodies.

The experience is more comfortable than the fun my family shared on the Mall on the evening before the Coronation that came a year after the Queen's accession to the throne. No one minded the rain or the lack of a mattress. Aged eight, I chatted with strangers. We compared our periscopes: two angled mirrors in a long cardboard box made it possible for children to see over the shoulders of grown-ups.

I have never seen anyone having difficulty when they met the Queen. She came with Prince Philip to Durrington High school. I encouraged everyone there to relax: nothing could happen that she had not experienced before. From Anna Brownsted's charming display at the Seafront Gallery by the Lido to this newspaper's Jubilee supplement, we can share together all the good during the past 70 years.