



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the Queen at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth.

The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

Sir John Major said, "As Her Majesty The Queen celebrates her Diamond Jubilee she does so as the second longest serving Monarch in a thousand years of British history. HM The Queen is Head of a Commonwealth of two billion people, in fifty-four nations over five Continents. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth last October, it was unanimously agreed to establish The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, to honour Her Majesty's lifetime of duty, and create an enduring legacy to her sixty years of service. The Trust, which was launched officially on 6th February 2012 the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty's Accession aims to raise funds from Governments, individuals, organisations and industry, to invest in projects that will make a real and lasting impact on the lives of people of all generations throughout the Commonwealth." Members of the public will be welcome to make contributions if they wish to do so. It will be for the Trustees, under Sir John's chairmanship, to determine the precise direction and day-to-day operations of the Trust. Visit the trust website at: www.jubileetribute.org

Marking the Diamond Jubilee

THE United Kingdom is running a range of activities to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and explain why Britain is such a creative, open, connected and dynamic country to live, work and visit. This weekend thousands of people are gathering for Diamond Jubilee celebrations to mark 60 years of Her Majesty the Queen's reign. People all over Britain are holding street parties, lighting beacons and attending festivals, treasuring our shared heritage and coming together for community events. Thousands



Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee at the High Commission in Dhaka.

will line the streets of London on Tuesday 5 June to watch the Queen travel to Buckingham Palace, after a service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral.

Warmest felicitations to Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II on her Diamond Jubilee reign



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The Jubilee stands as a landmark to the power of the national idea

PETER WHITTLE

THE Queen famously asked a group of economists, at the height of the 2008 financial crisis, "Why did nobody see it coming?"

Of course, most mainstream economists didn't predict it. However great their expertise, orthodoxies prevailed. And the same is true of pundits in other areas.

Take the monarchy itself: fifteen years ago it appeared dead in the water. And yet, here we are, on the eve of one of the biggest public celebrations Britain has seen in decades.

The 10,000 Diamond Jubilee street parties across the country represent the tip of the iceberg one estimate put the number of celebrations, in all their forms, at three times that amount. And one recent poll showed that support for the monarchy was standing at a record 80 per cent, with the woman at the centre of the institution now virtually beyond criticism.

Why is the Diamond Jubilee proving to be such a big deal? The answer is simple, and it's not just about a couple of extra days off.

There is a sense that this is an extraordinary landmark in Britain's story, and that it is completely appropriate to mark it as such. For, unlike the Olympics, the Jubilee is a completely and organically British event. It couldn't and wouldn't happen anywhere else but here.

It's perfectly possible to be proud of British history and not be a staunch monarchist. This country has a long and illustrious radical tradition, and was the first to challenge and subdue the absolute power of the monarch (as well as cutting off his head.)

But despite this or perhaps, because of it the monarchy has managed to flourish in its position as the most potent symbol of the nation. And, with the exception of some great sporting events, no other institution in the modern era has its unifying power, its ability to bring together all parts of society in the way in which we will see this weekend.

That such a desire to celebrate something which is so uniquely of us exists at all might come as a surprise to many. For, in the years since the Queen's accession in 1952, Britain and Britishness has endured a massive cultural onslaught.

A counter-culture, antipathetic to the idea of nation and national pride, has exerted a far-reaching impact on national life. Partly as a consequence of this, but also because of liberal guilt on the part of Britain's cultural establishment, the educational system virtually ceased teaching the national story in any meaningful sense.

British identity had been dissected and deconstructed, British culture was mocked and ridiculed.

And in addition, the coun-



try has found itself trapped within a pincer movement, between those who want it to break up from the inside, and those who want it to be submerged into something bigger on the outside.

Yet, despite all this, pride in Britain, as expressed by its people, has shown a remarkable capacity for survival.

Battered from seemingly all sides, it has had every reason to keel over and die. But it remains, a testament to the ability of basic underlying values to withstand both the vagaries of social fashion and outright political attack.

A recent survey on patriotism and national pride by the think tank Demos found that

79 per cent of those asked characterised themselves as proud to be British citizens. In fact, such levels of pride were the highest in any European country (bar Latvia).

This gives the lie to the notion that people don't care, or are more likely to be ashamed or apologetic about being British. In the 1940s, George Orwell remarked that this country's intelligentsia was unique in its distaste for its own nationality, and that remains true today. "They would rather steal from a poor box," he wrote, "than stand for God Save the King."

The elites and the country are miles apart. That figure of

79 per cent is hugely heartening. It shows that, whatever attacks it might have had to endure, a sense of Britain, and a pride in it, still runs deep.

The Jubilee will give us a great illustration of this. The street parties, the get-togethers in pubs and parks these are celebrations that come from the grassroots. Metropolitan diffidence be damned being part of something bigger than yourself can be one of the most uplifting feelings of all. It's time to celebrate an event which will be in the national memory for decades to come.

Peter Whittle is author of 'Being British What's Wrong With It?'



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