

Remarks by H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG at the Queen's Birthday Parade

Good morning, Turks and Caicos, and a particularly warm welcome to all who are with us in the nation's Capital celebrating not only Her Majesty's 96th Birthday, but also her Platinum Jubilee – an extraordinary 70 years of unbroken service and making Her Majesty the longest-reigning monarch in British History.

Before saying another thing, let me commend those on parade today for your turnout, your foot and rifle drill, and most importantly your service. The 'shine' our security and emergency services show here on parade ground, belies the necessary 'grime' of their day-to-day efforts on behalf of our Territory. We all thank you for your service. Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in a round of applause recognising your uniformed services.

Over the last three years I've come to understand your respective roles but also how that work impacts on your families and your wider lives. For your families here, supporting you, as they support you every working day of your life, I pass on my personal thanks.

With the mention of families and children, given this extraordinary 70 year Jubilee, I am going to focus on the early years of Her Majesty's reign because I hope, even with the distance of time, young people here with us today will be able to appreciate what it must have been like for Her Majesty, as both a child and as a young woman, to assume enormous lifelong responsibilities and then stick to her vows. In this I do think she is a global role-model.

We often associate hefty responsibilities with those in middle, or later age, but leadership and the burden of service can – and at times must – be shouldered by the young. Given the impact the Pandemic had on youth and youth activities it is so heartening to see the Cadets, Scouts and Cubs here on parade in such numbers and looking so grand. So, Mums and Dads, Uncles and Aunts, brothers, and sisters, let's recognise our young people with us today, on parade, who carried themselves and their Turks and Caicos Islands Flags with such exuberance and joy.

None of us know – least of all our children – what their futures hold and our Queen, as a young child, did not expect to be Monarch. Her destiny changed on the unexpected abdication of her Uncle – Edward VIII – when her father George VI, assumed the Throne.

As a result, the now Queen made her first radio broadcast in the early months of the Second World War when, aged just 14, she recorded a message on the BBC in support of young people across Europe evacuated from their homes: "I can say to you all" – she said – "that we children at home are full of cheerfulness and courage". "We are trying to do all we can to help our gallant sailors, soldiers and airmen, and we are trying, too, to bear our own

share of the danger and sadness of war.”

Princess Elizabeth’s first solo public engagement was on her 16th birthday, when she inspected the Grenadier Guards at Windsor Castle. During the war, she remained with the Royal Family in London even as Buckingham Palace was bombed. She enlisted becoming the first woman in the Royal Family to join the armed services as a full-time, active member and learned to be a vehicle mechanic.

At just 18, Princess Elizabeth was appointed a Counsellor of State during the King’s absence as he toured Italian battlefields and for the first time, she carried out some of the duties of Head of State. On Victory in Europe Day, she and her sister Princess Margaret, aged 19 and 14 respectively, joined the crowds in London incognito, Princess Elizabeth with her military cap pulled down over her face.

In 1947, Princess Elizabeth, then 21, married Prince Philip of Greece. The couple went on to have four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward. Queen Elizabeth now has three generations of heirs in line for the monarchy. Her son Charles, Prince of Wales, is followed by her grandson, William, the Duke of Cambridge, and the newest heir, her great grandson, George.

In February 1952, Elizabeth became Queen at just 25, after her father died of cancer. Three million people lined the route from Westminster Abbey back to Buckingham Palace after her coronation ceremony. Britain was slowly emerging from the privations of wartime, rationing and shortages. The sudden accession of a beautiful 25-year-old woman, someone the public had watched since she was an infant, created newfound hope. Prime Minister Winston Churchill talked about “a new Elizabethan age” to shed the sorrows and losses of war.

To place this in context she became our Queen while we in TCI were still a dependency of Jamaica. It would take a further 10 years before John Glenn would splash down just off Grand Turk following his three orbits of the earth, a further 21 years before TCI had its first Governor and 24 years until JAGS McCartney won the 1976 election.

She has, as a result, been on the throne during the time in office of 14 British Prime Ministers and 14 US Presidents. She has been Defender of the Faith during the time of 7 Popes – of whom she has met four – and she has seen the baton pass nine times between Secretary Generals of the United Nations while she has been Head of the Commonwealth. A remarkable record of Service and of experience.

Importantly I think, for us here today, the Queen is a committed Christian and churchgoer and has often spoken of her faith in her speeches and broadcasts. In her 2014 Christmas Broadcast she said: “For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life”. “A role model of reconciliation and forgiveness, he stretched out his hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ’s example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.

The longest overseas tour that the Queen has undertaken began in Bermuda in November 1953 and ended in Gibraltar in May 1954. She was away for 168 days. The greatest number of countries that the Queen has visited in one trip is 14. This was during her 1966 trip to the Caribbean which included TCI.

Looking back many, including myself, are fond of recalling the words Her Majesty said on her 21st Birthday – “I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.” Isn’t it inspiring to think of a young woman, making such a profound promise, on her 21st Birthday and then living up to that promise – all the way through her life to her 96th Birthday.

If I were to be presumptuous, and suggest what Her Majesty’s greatest accomplishment is, it would have to be the Commonwealth. Queen Elizabeth, then still in her 20s, threw herself behind a fledgling group her father had initially overseen. The Queen made the Commonwealth a priority and, under her stewardship, it has grown from eight members to 54 members today. In the words of her son, Prince Charles: “As a family of some 2.6 billion people, from fifty-four nations across six continents, the Commonwealth represents a rich diversity of traditions, experience and talents which can help to build a more equal, sustainable and prosperous future”. Helping build a global organisation second only to the United Nations in size, is a remarkable and positive legacy.

Now, back to the Parade ground. We will be presenting medals today to those on Parade who have served for 18, 25 and 30 years. There are many not on Parade today who will receive their awards separately. To commemorate the Jubilee, those who completed five full years of service, on 6 February 2022, in the Emergency Services and Armed Forces will also receive the Platinum Jubilee medal. It carries on it a Latin Inscription that translates as: “Elizabeth II, By the Grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith”. To not unduly keep those on Parade in the sun, many on Parade are already wearing their medal and, I will therefore present to just a representative sample.

I end on welcoming, for the first time on this Parade and stood beside the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force, a Force with a 220 year history, the newest addition to those who protect us; those who represent the Officers and Marines of our very own Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment. Not only the first time on this parade, it is also the first time they have worn their new ceremonial uniform which draws on the theme of their green berets and their affiliation with the largest – and to my mind the best – Infantry Regiment of the British Army – ‘The Rifles’.

The previous British Chief of Defence Staff (the most senior military officer in the UK across the Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) and the present Chief of the General Staff (the most senior officer in the British Army) are both ‘Rifles’ Officers and I’m grateful to them both for the support they have given us, not least in having one of their best Non-Commissioned Officers working permanently with our Marines.

Presently they number a little over 40 and they are set to grow again in the coming months by around 30 – and given their success we expect further growth

next year. The majority are part-time volunteers, but they are consistently operational, in support of our Maritime Police and our Immigration Enforcement Team. They are the only Overseas Territory Military force operational every night, and their contribution is already significant. It would be fair to say their story has only just begun. I am incredibly proud to be able to take the salute at their first Queens Birthday Parade.

So in celebration of this Platinum Jubilee, may God Bless Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. May God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands. May God bless all those before me and everything you represent in terms of serving our people and securing our future. With that it only remains for me to say, in the words of the national anthem: 'Long May She Reign Over us. God Save the Queen'.

Thank you.

H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG

Turks and Caicos Islands cadets