

Queen Elizabeth II: 1926-2022

History in the air as crowd watches

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The High Street in front of Bath's Guildhall became a solid mass of people on Sunday afternoon.

There was a sense of history in the air shortly after 3pm as the people awaited the proclamation of a new king, telephones were held aloft and children stood on ledges on the opposite side of the street, straining for a view.

To the left of the steps stood Bath's MP, Wera Hobhouse, the mayor of the West of England Dan Norris, council leader Kevin Guy and numerous dignitaries.

From the same steps where Lord Chris Patten was confronted with baying crowds as he lost Bath's parliamentary seat in 1991, the mayor, Rob Appleyard, and Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall emerged to respectful and dignified silence.

The council chair, Cllr Stephenson-McGall, made the proclamation:

"Whereas it has pleased almighty God to call to his mercy our late sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth the Second of blessed and glorious memory, by whose decease the crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is solely and rightfully come to the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George.

"We, therefore, the lords spirit-



The procession to Parade Gardens after the proclamation

ual and temporal of this realm and members of the House of Commons, together with other members of Her late Majesty's Privy Council and representatives of the realms and territories, aldermen and citizens of London, and others, do now hereby with one voice and consent of tongue and heart publish and proclaim that the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George is now, by the death of our late sovereign of happy memory, become our only lawful and rightful liege lord Charles the Third, by the grace of

God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of his other realms and territories, King, head of the Commonwealth, defender of the faith, to whom we do acknowledge all faith and obedience with humble affection; beseeching God by whom kings and queens do reign to bless His Majesty with long and happy years to reign over us.

"Given at St James's Palace this tenth day of September in the year of our lord two thousand and twenty-two."

After the proclamation, a choir led a rather muffled, open-air rendition of *God Save the King*, a performance that was resoundingly improved upon 90 minutes later in Bath Abbey.

After the proclamation, dignitaries processed directly to Parade Gardens to lay floral tributes to the Queen.

Mr Norris said: "As I witnessed a moment in history at the Bath proclamation of King Charles III, it felt like a time to both look forwards and back, to think about the big changes that have happened and are yet to come and how our people have the character and resolve to rise to the most difficult challenges.

"It has been a momentous few days for our region and nation and I'm optimistic that under our new King we can shape a brighter future for all our citizens."



Comment By Dan Norris, West of England Metro Mayor

The passing of anyone in their 90s, even in this new golden age of medicine, can hardly be considered a surprise.

But it was nevertheless shocking to hear those words out loud. The Queen is dead; long live the King.

She was a month older than Marilyn Monroe, three years older than Martin Luther King and 14 years older than John Lennon. She was older than Lego, air conditioning and the creation of the greatest pop group the world has ever known.

It felt like the Queen was always there: a fixture in the nation, as certain as the sun rising and setting each day. Even as the world changed around her, as those figures from an unreachable past I've just mentioned succumbed to that one certainty in life, she remained.

But she changed with the times, too. Even the most diehard republicans would have to admire her for her almost Beatle and Bowie-like ability to adapt and reinvent - to move, and excel, in a changing world.

While her longevity was impressive, her sense of duty was extraordinary - a life of impeccable service and conduct, carried out with dignity and decorum.

Like during the first Covid lockdown, when she gave a stirring tutorial in leadership for all politicians. Sporting her usual pearls and gazing steadily at the camera, she gave hope and calm where there was neither when she said those immortal words and echoed Battle of Britain and World War Two spirit: "We will meet again".

The Queen's sense of duty was perhaps illustrated best by her conduct during the securing of the Northern Ireland peace process. This most terrible of conflicts had cost many thousands of lives on both sides - including a member of the Queen's own family. To see her shake hands with the head of the IRA as peace was finally secured was a momentous event - showing why peace is so hard to obtain and the character and personal sacrifices

needed to make it happen.

And so the grief for so many West of Englanders - for so many of you reading this column - is real and palpable, deep and heartfelt. Many are in mourning, not just for a genuinely remarkable monarch but for a constant in all our lives - a reassuring and calming presence for so many at home and across the globe.

The country the Queen came to symbolise by the lottery of birth is bigger than any one individual or institution. As one era ends, so another begins.

We face so many challenges, both as a nation and in our brilliant West of England. Let us all then remember and live by the values which the Queen cherished, and which made her reign so special: duty, fidelity and service to others. If we not only remember these values, but also do our best to live by them, the Queen's influence will live on well beyond her passing to make us an even better nation and region.



A choir and dignitaries sing God Save the King outside the Guildhall; left, laying flowers in Parade Gardens after the proclamation

RAYMOND GUBBAY