

# shine

Older People. Sharing Stories

JUNE 2022



Platinum  
*Jubilee*  
Special

Celebrating 70 years of the Queen




A close-up photograph of HM Queen Elizabeth II. She is smiling warmly, looking slightly to her right. She is wearing a light-colored, textured straw hat with a black feather and a gold ribbon. Her outfit consists of a matching textured jacket with a decorative black and white patterned trim along the collar and down the front. She is adorned with a multi-strand pearl necklace and a brooch on her left lapel. The background is a blurred crowd of people, some holding flags, suggesting a public event.

**“YOU’RE  
ONLY AS OLD  
AS YOU FEEL.”**

HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II, 2021





**“THOUGH  
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US ALL**





Welcome to this very special edition of Shine, published to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

For many of our readers, Queen Elizabeth II has been the only monarch they've ever known. She's been a constant in a changing world. As the Queen has grown older, so have we. We couldn't think of a more fitting older person to dedicate an issue of Shine to.

Many older people will remember the Queen's Coronation. For some, it's one of their earliest memories: huddled round a tiny television to watch the pageantry unfold; Union Jack bunting; and tables in the street piled high with jam sandwiches and Coronation Chicken. We share a selection of readers' memories of how they have celebrated Royal events from 1953 onwards. Margaret was born on Coronation Day - a day to remember for lots of reasons in her family! A lot of readers remember the Queen's many visits to Leeds. Our selection of pictures and recollections will hopefully stir some memories within you.

Though this issue is inspired by the Queen, it is the stories of older people in Leeds that remain at our heart. We aim to share a rich and diverse selection of stories. Many have a royal connection: Vera guarded the Queen, Paul photographed the Queen, Betty was inspired by her to start a collection. We've also sprinkled some "Alternative Queens" through our pages. These Leeds people offer a slightly different perspective on the Jubilee. In Yeadon, Judith is referred to as "Your Majesty" because of her obsession with the Royals; Susan is a Drag Queen who performs in a show bar; Sheila was crowned Carnival Queen in the 1980s. And we meet Fitness Queen Joyce, still teaching a class aged 95. We're also representing a rather different side of the Jubilee and remembering those agents of chaos and rebellion, the Sex Pistols. Their version of the National Anthem was a feature of the 1977 Silver Jubilee and captured the imaginations of many younger people back then. We hope the Royalists amongst you will forgive us a nod to our Republican readers!



For this special Jubilee issue, we've spoke to a huge amount of older people. Many thanks to everyone who took time to be interviewed and share their thoughts.

We're particularly grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund, who have funded the issue. It's down to them that we are able to provide this issue free to thousands of older people in Leeds.

You may notice a new design for Shine. We're excited that the project will continue and we'll be publishing our next new-look issue of the magazine in the Autumn.

Please do get in touch if you have ideas for articles and stories.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this special issue and wish you a very happy Jubilee!

The Shine Team

*Special Thanks to:*

*Leodis; Leeds Libraries; Leeds Museums and Galleries; Cross Gates Good Neighbours Scheme; Arthur France; Danny Friar; Leeds Playhouse; Association of Blind Asians; AVSED; Armley Helping Hands; Cloth Cat; Age UK; Chapel FM; The Viaduct.*



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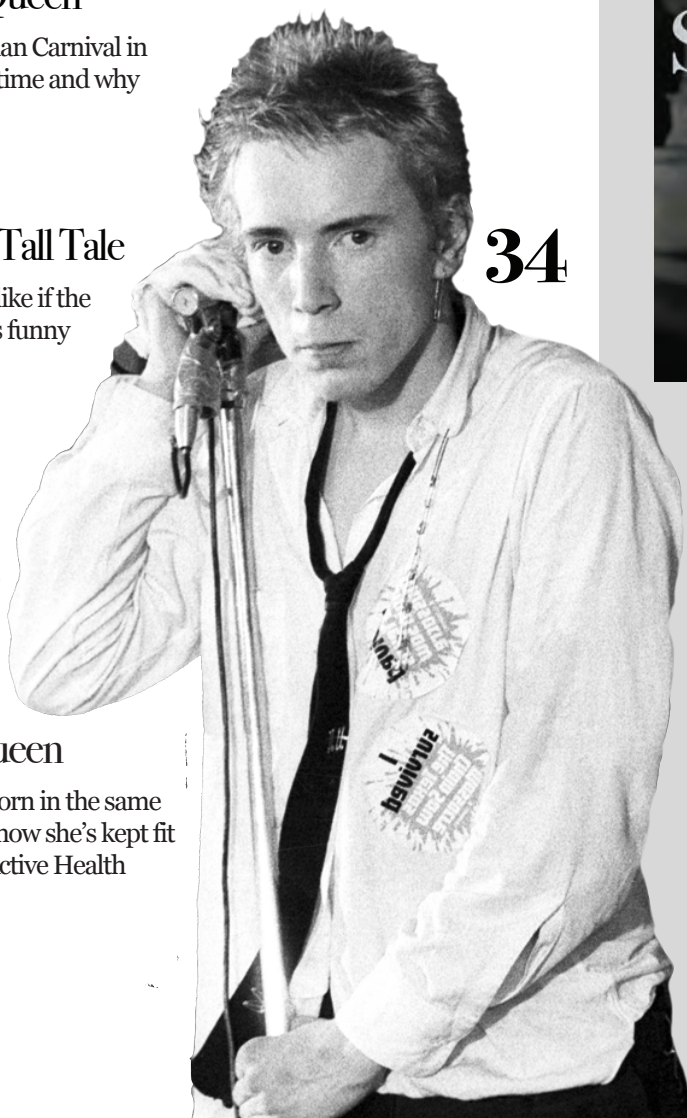
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# 34



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# 70 Years

1952 2022

**I**n 1952, Princess Elizabeth accepted the responsibility of being Queen and made the following proclamation: “My heart is too full for me to say more to you today than I shall always work as my father did throughout his reign, to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples, spread as they are all the world over.” George VI had died only two days earlier; the new Queen was in her mid-twenties. The story goes that she went up a tree in Kenya a Princess and came down the next morning Queen. 70 years on, Queen Elizabeth continues to reign. She’s Britain’s longest serving monarch. Through it all, she’s continued

to serve the people of the UK and the Commonwealth with stoic fortitude.

For many people, Britain is nothing without the Queen. Her face is on the money and the stamps, not just in the UK, but in at least 30 other countries. Every year (aside for some exceptions) she opens parliament with the Queen’s Speech. She represents us all over the world – she’s visited over 100 countries and hosted 112 State Visits to the UK. She’s admired by both heads-of-state and ordinary citizens alike.

Aside from her public duties, the Queen is a fully-rounded human being. “People who know her well talk about her sense of humour,” says royal biographer Robert Hardman. She takes a particular interest in horses. She started riding aged 6, on a Shetland Pony called Peggy. Throughout her reign, she has attended the Trooping of the Colour on horseback. As well as riding, she’s always loved racing. The Queen has owned several thoroughbreds and is known to love a flutter. It’s notable that she recently missed the State

Opening of Parliament because of ill-health, but only a few days later was seen at the Platinum Jubilee Royal Windsor Horse Show. Priorities! Behind the pomp and circumstance, the Queen is apparently relatively normal; when he met her, former-Beatle Paul McCartney described her as “surprisingly down-to-earth”.

As well as being a human being, the Queen is an icon. Her face is an instantly recognisable brand. Some say she’s the biggest celebrity on the planet. Over 70 years, artists have depicted her in all sorts of ways. From the classic Cecil Beaton Coronation photograph to Andy Warhol’s day-glo screen prints, artists from all over the world have used her image as inspiration. Even the Queen’s corgis form part of her classic image. She received her first Corgi, Susan, in 1944, as an 18th birthday present and has kept them ever since.

She’s held dear to that promise: to “to advance the happiness and prosperity” of her peoples all over the world.

Like any family, the Royals have been through their ups and downs. Very public divorces and spats have seen the Queen’s family appear constantly in tabloid newspapers. However, Elizabeth II has dealt with these trials with a quiet dignity. Many will have negative opinions about some of the Royal Family, but it’s rare to find someone who doesn’t admire the Queen. Through it all, she’s been accompanied by her loyal husband Philip. When he died in 2021, his widow described the “huge void” that had opened up in her life.

Queen Elizabeth has served her country for over 70 years. She’s gone from training as a mechanic in 1944, to supporting the nation with encouraging words during the pandemic of 2020. She’s hosted over 1.5 million people at Buckingham Palace and she’s seen 14 Prime Ministers come and go. She was the first monarch to embrace both television and the internet. Through it all, she’s held dear to that promise: “to advance the happiness and prosperity” of her peoples all over the world. God Save the Queen!







# 70 TIMELINE Years 1952-2022



## 1926 | BIRTH OF THE QUEEN

Elizabeth is the first child to the Duke and Duchess of York, George and Elizabeth. At the time, her grandfather is king (George V). She is born on 21st April and baptised by the Archbishop of York soon after, on 29th May. Elizabeth's sister Margaret arrives 4 years later.



## 1936 | KING GEORGE VI

Following her uncle's abdication, Elizabeth's father accedes to the throne and is crowned King George VI. She becomes heir presumptive aged 10 and it becomes clear that one day, she will be Queen.



## 1952 | QUEEN ELIZABETH

On 6th February 25-year-old Princess Elizabeth is touring Kenya when she receives the news of her father's death. Philip breaks the news to his wife and she becomes Queen immediately. Queen Elizabeth retains the royal House of Windsor, much to the annoyance of her husband.

## 1953 | CORONATION DAY

The new Queen is crowned on 2nd June at Westminster Abbey, after a period of mourning for father. Celebrations take place across the Commonwealth; it is the first Coronation to be fully televised. Millions of people all over the world watch the event.

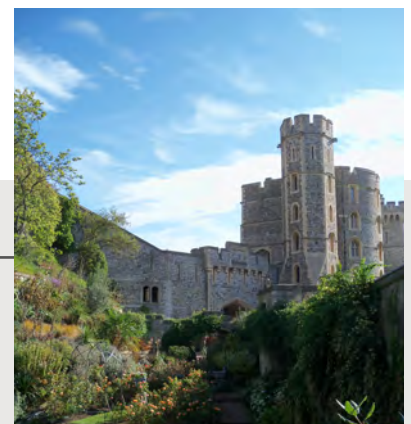


Though London was deluged with rain, the weather did not deter the crowds. Thousands packed the street to support the new Queen and Britons all over the country watched the event on TV.



## 1977 | SILVER JUBILEE

The Queen celebrates 25 years of her reign by an expansive 3-month-long tour of the United Kingdom. No other monarch had visited so much of the country in such a short space of time. The Queen and Prince Philip also visit Commonwealth countries like Fiji, Tonga, Canada and New Zealand.



## 1992 | ANNUS HORIBILIS

The Queen's family suffer a series of problems: Prince Andrew separates from Sarah; scandal besets Charles and Diana; fire ravages Windsor Castle. The Queen says it is "not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure."





## 1947 | MARRIES PHILIP

Princess Elizabeth met Prince Philip in the 1930s and she claims to have fallen in love with him when she was a teenager. They marry on 20th November at Westminster Abbey. Elizabeth had to save ration coupons to buy the material for her gown, which was designed by Norman Hartnell.



## 1948 | PRINCE CHARLES

Charles is born at Buckingham Palace on 14th November. A month before his birth, George VI had given Elizabeth permission to give her children the royal titles of Prince and Princess. On his birth, Charles becomes heir apparent; he's now the oldest and longest-serving heir apparent in British history. Charles becomes the first heir apparent to attend school, rather than have private education at home. Charles is joined by a sister, Anne, in 1950, Andrew in 1960 and Edward in 1964.



## 1957 | ANCIENT POWERS

After the Suez crisis, Anthony Eden resigns and Queen Elizabeth is called upon to exercise her royal power and choose a new Prime Minister. This unusual situation had rarely occurred before and only came about because of the absence of formal mechanisms in the Conservative Party. The Queen consults ministers and appoints Harold Macmillan Prime Minister. After some criticism, the rules change in 1965 and the Queen no longer involves herself in such political affairs of state.

## 2015 | RECORD BREAKER

The Queen becomes longest reigning British Monarch, passing the record of Queen Victoria at 64 years. If she reigns for 2 more years, she will break the record for the world's longest reigning monarch. Queen Elizabeth is also the oldest reigning monarch.

The then 89-year-old monarch said the title was "not one to which I have ever aspired".



## 2022 | PLATINUM JUBILEE

The Queen celebrates 70 years on the throne with a two-day bank holiday and events up and down the country. After catching Covid earlier in the year, the Queen's health is much in question. The Queen celebrates her 96th birthday privately in the Sandringham estate. Her health problems mean she is unable to go riding, but she is pictured with two of her beloved horses. During 2022, the Queen is forced to miss several public events. In May, Prince Charles attends the state opening of parliament in her absence; he reads the Queen's Speech on her behalf. Fears for the Queen's health are somewhat quashed when she appears in public at the first of many Platinum Jubilee celebrations in May.





# The Queen in LEEDS

*Over the years, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has visited Leeds many times. From her visit in the 1940s, right up to the 2010s, the people of Leeds have always offered her a warm welcome.*

*We look back across the decades and remember some key occasions when The Queen was in Leeds.*



# 19 40<sup>s</sup>

**T**he first of the Queen's visits to Leeds came before she was Queen. It was July 1949 and 23-year-old Princess Elizabeth had only recently been married. She and her husband Philip arrived by train into Halifax and toured the county. The visit culminated in a huge event for Leeds Children's Day in Round-

hay Park. Local newspapers reported that there were 50,000 people there. One commentator described the princess: "She was wearing a floral silk tea dress in an intriguing, if indecipherable print (which, judging by the lady behind her, was all the rage that year)."

Joan was 14 at the time and was selected to be Queen of Leeds Children's Day. Many years later, Joan remembers her surprise when the Duke of Edinburgh bowed to her – instead of the other way around! Joan was carrying a bouquet of roses and was "frightened to death" that the petals would drop off in the heat.

Many others say the royals when they came to Leeds city centre. "I saw the Queen years ago, when she was Princess Elizabeth," recalls June. "We came out of work and we were allowed to go down the road to watch her pass. I worked at Breslov's at the time. We worked on machines, sewing dresses. I'm 90 now and I was young. Maybe 15 or 16. There was a big parade and we all waved."

**Left** - Royal Procession, The Headrow, 1958  
© Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.

**Below** - Princess Elizabeth thanks children for the gymnastics display in Roundhay Park, 1949  
© Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.





# 19 50<sup>s</sup>



**Below** - The Queen visits engineering firm R. W. Crabtree & Sons Ltd., Holbeck, 1958 © *Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers*.







**Left, top** Above - Jack Lyons of the Leeds Musical Festival is presented to The Queen, Leeds Town Hall, 1958 © *Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers*.

**Left** - The Queen meets members of the cast of the opera "Samson", Leeds Grand Theatre, 1958 © *Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers*.

**A**fter her coronation, the Queen's visits to the area began to take place quite regularly. She visited Morley in 1954; and came to Leeds again in 1958.

"I remember the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh coming to Leeds in about 1954," says Viv. "My Mother and I stood at one side of the road and my aunt and grandma stood at the opposite side. So someone was sure to get a glimpse of the Queen! We were in Meanwood, at the crossroads of Shaw Lane and Meanwood Road, outside what was then the Melbourne Arms pub where my grandma used to work."

People often turned out in their thousands, just to catch a glimpse of Her Majesty. "It seemed a very long wait before the big black cars were spotted," recalls Viv. "Then everyone cheered and someone pushed me to the front so I could see - I was very small. I waved excitedly expecting to see the Queen, but I did get a nice wave from the Duke of Edinburgh. My grandma and aunt were the lucky ones - they got the best view of her and that royal wave."

Maureen remembers turning out for the Queen in the 1950s too: "I was in the Girls' Life Brigade and we were on parade down at Quarry Hill, where the flats were. On the round bit. I didn't see much of her though. There were quite a few in front of us! But we definitely paraded when she came. We were in our uniforms, the whole company. I was about 9 or 10."

"I remember standing at the roundabout in Scott Hall, opposite the park," says Judith. "All my schoolfriends and lots and lots of people. The Queen was driving past in a big black car. I remember waving at the flag."

Often children were given commemorative memorabilia to mark the royal visit. "I remember the Queen came to Rotherham," says Rose. "This was the year of the Coronation. There was a square, with shops all the way round. We all stood there in a big crowd, waiting for her. We were presented with a New Testament. We were so excited. I can still see her now, every detail. She was young, really beautiful".

The 1958 visit saw the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh touring the famous Burton's factory in Harehills. They also attended performances for the Leeds Triennial Musical Festival. One Harehills resident remembers the excitement: "I lived in near the Burton's factory on Hudson Road. The buzz went round and all the local kids lined the road to see the Queen. I joined the throng standing on a wall near the junction of Compton Road and Hudson Road. We seemed to wait for hours and all I got was a fleeting view of a white gloved hand waving through the window of the black car."



# 19 60<sup>s</sup>

**M**any Seacroft residents still remember the occasion when the Queen opened the newly-built Seacroft Civic Centre in 1965. Jean was 15 at the time, living with her parents. “I worked in an office near the new civic centre, which the Queen opened,” she remembers. “We were given the morning off to go and see her. It was a very grey, misty, horrible day. There were crowds and crowds of people lining the Ring Road up at Seacroft, waiting to see her and waving flags. We went to look – but couldn’t see very much. We hung out and saw what we could, then enjoyed our time off! She was wearing green, she was very young.”

One lucky family got to have tea with the Queen. Sylvia saw it all happen:

“I lived on Kentmere Avenue at the time and we knew that the Queen was to visit one of the houses in our road. The road was lined with people and their children, all dressed up in their best clothes, with their little Union Jacks, waiting to wave to the Queen. I had a baby at the time, so didn’t go out, but watched from the bedroom window. I was so impressed by the two policemen who were standing near my garden gate. With their best uniforms and white gloves on, they made a splendid sight! The Queen went for a cup of tea at a house across the road from me, so we were all able to get a good look at her when she stepped out of the car. More than most people got. They were a bit fed up that after a couple of hours standing in the cold and damp waiting, the royal car arrived, but swept past so fast that all they saw was the royal gloved hand doing its famous wave.”

**Below** - The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh open the Seacroft Civic Centre, 1965 © Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.





**T**he Queen marked her Silver Jubilee year with an extended tour of the UK, and took in Leeds as a stop on the journey. Pat made a point of going into Leeds city centre to catch a glimpse: “She came round very slowly,” she remembers. “We had a very good view. My children weren’t very old then – we all loved it.” Like in Coronation Year, the streets were bedecked with Union Jack bunting and people thronged in their thousands. “I was part of the guard of honour,” recalls Liz. “I was standing in my guide uniform at City Square, as she was driven to the reception. I remember how bright her dress looked.”

The highlight of the 1977 visit was an event at Elland Road. 40, 000 school children entertained the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh with displays of sporting prowess. The couple were driven around in a Range Rover – the Royal vehicle of choice. One commentator described the Elland Road visit as “the biggest and the noisiest festival” of the whole UK tour.

19  
70<sup>S</sup>  
ANDBEYOND

**Below** - Prince Philip and The Queen at Elland Road, 1977





Since the 1970s, the Queen has continued to come to Leeds. She made a memorable visit in 2002, as part of her Golden Jubilee celebrations. Many Leeds people were honoured to be invited to a special reception at Harewood House. Jacqueline attended the lavish Garden Party. “I was invited to mark my long service,” she explains. “Over 30 years’ service, working in Home Care. It was an afternoon tea with cucumber sandwiches. We saw her but we didn’t get too near her. It was lovely.”

The Queen re-opened the City Varieties in 2012, again visiting to mark another Jubilee. As before, thousands of people flocked to see her. She continues to attract a crowd! Many more visits have taken place; we are sure you have your own cherished memories of the Queen in Leeds.

In 2002 the Queen herself made the following statement, to sum up her feelings about visiting the area: “The character of Yorkshire’s people is distinctive and unchanging: trenchant, determined, and welcoming. I have never failed to be impressed by the warmth, and the loyal support, wherever I have visited.”

**Right and below** - The Queen’s visit to Leeds during her Diamond Jubilee visit, 2012 © Ollievison Photography

# 1980- 2012







**Right** - The Queen on Briggate, 2012 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Below** - The Queen at Leeds Civic Hall, 1996 © Paul Ratcliffe









# The Queen of Yeadon

*Judith Watkinson is an avid royalist who lives in Yeadon.  
She's owned almost 5,000 items of royal memorabilia.  
She's known in the area for her devotion to the Queen –  
she celebrates every royal event with gusto.  
Her collection has featured on TV and in local and national newspapers.*

*The Shine team went to visit  
Judith to find out more.*

*Written By: MAUREEN KERSHAW Photography: LISA JOHNSON*



“I hope I don’t bore you!” a slightly apologetic Judith remarked, as we entered her flat. Bored I most certainly was not. From entering the front door of her cosy home in LS19, I knew this promised to be an enlightening and joyous meeting.

Judith had donned a delightful outfit for the occasion. A tunic top covered back and front (printed with colour photos of the Queen and Royal Family) over a skirt with similarly decorated hemline! Praise had to be awarded for Judith’s scooter parked up under the stairs; it too was highly decorated with Union Jack flags and bore a personalised number plate: ‘Her Majesty’.

A lovely picture of the Queen had pride of place in the hallway. This had been the start of Judith’s collection. Walking into the living room my breath was taken away at the sight of so many royal items and I couldn’t wait to hear the story of how her collection began in the 1980s. “I was living in Bradford at the time and went to buy a coffee table,” she tells me. “The shop didn’t have one, but I saw this beautiful picture of Her Majesty the Queen – she would have been on the Throne for 40 years at the time – so I bought that instead! So that’s how my collection started. I would buy anything to do with the Royal Family, not just our current monarch, anything at all. I’ve pictures from Edward VII, right up to the present. It’s only like someone collecting, say, football programmes, really, isn’t it? But it’s because of who it is and I wanted my things to be different.”

I was interested in where the interest in the Royals started. “I’ve always been a Royalist,” said Judith. “My mother took me to London every year, from being a little girl. We would go in early August, in celebration of the Queen Mother’s birthday on the 4th, followed by my mother’s birthday on the 5th.” As if right on cue, the doorbell rang and Judith answered the door to a delivery driver.

“Come in” she said to the driver. “Just stand it there please.” He leant a giant parcel against a wall. Judith turned to me. “Guess what that is,” she said, as I looked at the large, flat, brown packaging. “It’s a cardboard cut-out of the Queen being crowned”. She pointed to another life-size cut out of Her Majesty behind me. “I had to move it out of the window,” confesses Judith. “The neighbours kept thinking someone was in the flat!”

Judith resumes telling me about her childhood. “I grew up in Bradford and my mother always took my broth-

ers and I to Scarborough for a holiday. Then to London at the beginning of August. Sometimes we’d go to Hampton Court, going on the Thames so that the boys got a boat ride. There was always something happening at the Palace, in honour of the Queen Mother’s birthday. We’d also visit Downing Street or see the Crown Jewels. One time we were sitting outside the Tower of London and an American couple came out and sat down by us. The man turned to his wife and asked, so what did you think of it? She came back with, well it would be alright if they modernised it!”

One of the stars of Judith’s collection was her very own Crown Jewels, inspired by those at the Tower of London. The only difference is that Judith’s Jewels were made by a friend of hers, out of various odds and ends. “A lady called Molly who lived near me made light fittings for a living and she was brilliant with her hands, very clever. I asked her to make one of my chairs into a Throne for me and she did.” Molly thought Judith should have some Crown Jewels as well. “She put an advert in the Telegraph

& Argus appealing for anybody with broken jewellery to bring it to my address and they did. I took everyone’s name and address and when the Crown Jewels were finished, I invited them all, plus the Lord Mayor of Bradford, for afternoon tea.” The Jewels were truly home-made. “In the middle of the crown was a ping pong ball! The bit around the bottom of the crown was made from a pair of ladies’ silver shoes and the white fur was given the look of ermine by Molly using a marker pen. The cloak was originally a red velvet curtain. The orb was made from a rubber ball and the sceptre from a walking stick and part of a sword belonging to my young grandson. Both decorated in gold. Molly did an excellent job. When I moved

here from Bradford, though, they all unfortunately fell to pieces!”

In the move to Yeadon, Judith had to get rid of a lot of items. She had almost 5,000 items and downsized to 3,000. It must have been upsetting to say goodbye to nearly half of her collection. However, Judith seems quite sanguine. “A lot of it was passed on to others but there are many items which mean so much. I loved our house in Bradford – it was named ‘Windsor House’ and we had a tall flagpole with a Union Jack in the garden.” Judith shows a photograph and points out a concrete corgi. Despite the downsize, Judith still has a huge number of treasured items. “This here,” she said, pointing to a china cup set high up on a shelf, “is from the period of Edward VIII. My mother bought it in 1936 and it was always on my grandmother’s piano – until it fell off and smashed into smithereens. My auntie picked up every bit and glued it back together.” There are more unusual items. “Over there,” - my head was drawn to a white bowl with red lid – “Is a 42-year-old Christmas Pudding which the Queen gave to all her staff at Sandringham. It was given to me by the lady who had the shoe shop in our village

It’s a cardboard cut-out of the Queen being crowned. The neighbours kept thinking someone was in the flat!







whose friend worked on the Estate.” It’s not every day you see a 42-year-old Christmas Pudding.

All this makes me wonder what Judith’s family thinks of her collecting mania. How did she meet her husband? “I’ve always worked and at the time I met my husband, I was a receptionist for an electrical wholesaler. He was a friend of one of the men in the stores and he came along on a night out held for one of the young girls who was emigrating to Australia. So that’s how we met. Tony was a coal merchant and we married in 1973. We had two sons, now aged 41 and 37. Tony wasn’t a royalist to start with. He was very quiet, even when the TV company came to interview me. At the time we married I was working in a Care Home in Ilkley as an Activities Co-ordinator but then gave up to bring up the boys. I later returned, until my husband developed Alzheimer’s when I retired to care for him.” Tony died a few years ago. “In time I decided to move here to Yeadon and I’ve never stopped collecting, even though I had to downsize.”

I was interested to know if Judith had ever met the Queen. She tells me of an occasion in 1997, when The Queen and Prince Phillip came to Bradford to hand out Maundy Money. “A neighbour and I went to Centenary Square and as the royal car pulled up, the Queen was sitting at the far side and the Duke of Edinburgh was at ours. Prince Phillip stopped by us, noticing my neighbour’s son holding a little bouquet of flowers and asked him if they were for The Queen.” Not satisfied with this fleeting glance, Judith visited Norfolk, on the tip-off of a lady she’d met who knew the Queen regularly attended an

event near Sandringham. Judith had also heard some terrific advice from a photographer. “He said that if you are in a line-up and you wish the royal party to stop, don’t have flowers. Have something ridiculous like a giant tube of Smarties.” Judith’s son was with her and was clutching a soft-toy corgi. And he met the Queen Mother. The advice worked!

These brief encounters were small fry, compared to the story Judith then recounted:

“I was Activities Co-ordinator in an Ilkley nursing home. It was 70-bedded and all the residents were living with Alzheimer’s. We used to chat and one day I said to them, why don’t we plan a royal visit here? All the care staff laughed and told me not to be so daft. Which member of the Royal Family would come here? I said, well we’ll soon find out when I write to them and ask. I wrote to the Lord Lieutenant asking for anyone – not particularly the Queen, although that would have been brilliant. I got a reply thanking me for my interest, but I must appreciate how busy they are. However, he would be back in touch in six months’ time. Well six months went by and it was a difficult time: we had a fire at the nursing home, one resident sadly died and another didn’t return due to severe burns. Anyway, we got back to normal and the other carers said, we told you no-one would come. So I decided to ring up the Lord Lieutenant. He’d heard about the fire and said, tell you what, my Secretary will come and see you. And this lady and gentleman came and asked, what do you want someone to come for, do you want something opening? No I don’t, there’s 70 in this



**Left** - The portrait of the Queen that started Judith’s collection

**Above** - Judith wearing her home-made Crown Jewels

**Right** - Judith and her Royalty themed scooter



nursing home and just because they have an illness above the waist, they've still done their bit for the country and why shouldn't they have a royal visitor? Now as it happened, the Lord Lieutenant's father-in-law was living with Alzheimer's - so they chose Princess Alexandra. She was Patron of the Alzheimer's Society. It was all arranged and my boss just left it up to me to do all the organising for the event. Princess Alexandra came and she met 70 residents and many of their family then she had refreshments with us.

"Going on for a year later, I got a phone call from the Secretary again asking me if I would like to go to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. I said, is this a wind up? And he said, no it's not, seriously - would you like to go? One of my sons went with me and it was fantastic! On the day, we got into a taxi and I said, we want to go to Buckingham Palace and we want the front gates. Well, as we went in and under the grand arch, tears were streaming down my face. I couldn't believe it. You actually go inside the Palace then out onto the huge lawn. All down one side are the marquees where they serve sandwiches - as big as your thumb nail - then at the other side is where the VIPs go. At 4pm the Queen, Prince Phillip, Prince Charles, Prince Edward,

and Sophie came out. Across from the marquees we were first in the queue to see the royal party. Oh it was fantastic! The Queen smiled at us all as she walked by."

Visiting Buckingham Palace is clearly a fond memory for Judith. And despite downsizing her collection, she's still amassing royal memorabilia. It seems like everybody in Yeadon is aware of Judith. "They all know me in the charity shops," she laughs. "As for my scooter, the lads at the Town Hall did it up for me and made the personalised number plate. In Morrison's, if I go past the bakery, the Baker always salutes me and says, good morning Your Majesty!"

As our visit came to an end, I asked Judith about her favourite item. "My prized possession is the invitation to Buckingham Palace," she told me. "But I think my favourite has got to be the framed picture of the Queen - which started it all." ■

*Thanks to Judith for sharing her story and to AVSED for help with this story.*

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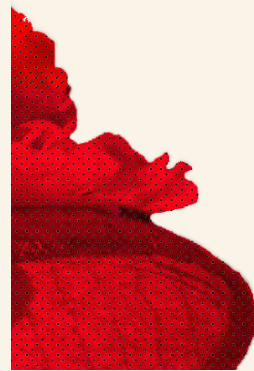




# THE QUEEN & I

*In these short vignettes, we meet 4 people  
with a personal connection to the Queen.*

*Each tell a different story of how a royal  
connection has affected their lives.*





## Born on Coronation Day

By Margaret Elizabeth Logan

**I** was born on 2nd June 1953 – which was the Queen’s Coronation Day. I was born at home – people didn’t used to go into hospitals much to have their babies. My mum and dad didn’t have a TV but they did hear the Coronation on the radio, the day I was born! A little while later I received a Coronation Spoon in the post. All babies born on that day got a spoon.

Mum was really proud to get it, I found it in her wardrobe when she sadly went into a home.

I’d never get rid of it, it’s beautiful. In a way, I feel a bit of a connection with the Queen because I was named after her and her sister. They decided on Margaret because that was my Mum’s name.



## The Queen’s Owl

By Betty Bennison

**M**any years ago, my sister -in-law, Jenny, and I went to London for the day, especially to visit Buckingham Palace. We were going to see the Queen’s jewellery collection. We had to join a long queue but everyone was so friendly and all were excited.

Hours later, we were inside and gazing in wonder at the beautiful collection. So many lovely things to admire but then I saw my very favourite item. Oh wonder, oh so beautiful: in front of me was the smallest sweetest little owl you have ever seen. Beautiful carved in gold, of course, with sapphire eyes and so cute.

Now I have my own collection of owls, in every shape and size imaginable. Glass, wood, lamps, vases, pictures, cuddly, clock, chimes, brooch, earrings. You name it, I have it. My collection is endless and given me hours of pleasure. When I go shopping, I am always on the look-out for another owl to add to my collection. And all because of that wee owl that belongs to our Queen.

I have never had the honour of meeting the Queen. I have enjoyed the many street parties that have been held when she had her special days. But the Queen has inspired a collection.



## Coronation Day Husband

By Joan Smith

**I** was a schoolgirl of 16. I come from London. We were given time off to revise for the O-Levels. Instead we went to Hyde Park. We met two soldiers; there was a good-looking one and there was a not-so-good-looking one. My friend ended up with the good-looking one. I said to her, “Well, I’m not going with the other one,” This chap Johnny said, “I’ll fetch another friend. And he did, a bit later. His name was Bill. He was quite a bit older than me, six years. I didn’t tell him I was a schoolgirl. He found out later! He’d just come back from Suez. They’d brought the troops back from Suez to march behind the Coronation parade. He was only back for a fortnight. He went back to Suez and we corresponded. We wrote every day. He was demobbed the next March and decided to stay in London. We got married later on. We couldn’t afford to buy a place in London, so we moved to Leeds. He worked in a Copper Works. I went into teaching and he did too.

It really opened up the city, the Coronation. There were lots of flags down the Mall, all down Fleet Street. We saw soldiers from lots of different countries, it was fantastic. It was miserable before, then it was so colourful. It really opened up the city. And I’ll always remember the Coronation because I met my husband!





Vera Merrey lining  
the route for King  
George and Queen  
Elizabeth,  
November 1946.



## Guarding the Queen

By Vera Merrey

**W**hen war broke out in 1939, I was a Girl Guide at All Saints Church, York Road, Leeds. I was given the task of knitting 'socks for soldiers' because I'd learned to knit using four needles. Following the instructions very carefully I got carried away and ended up with two different types of heel. Well, it didn't look right and when I showed my mam what I had achieved so far, she nearly died laughing. She finished the job and I left the Guides. I still intended to do my bit in the war effort, so I joined the Girls'

Brigade in Market Street. The uniform was a navy-blue forage cap, white shirt and my dad's black tie. I didn't think much that outfit, so as soon as I was sixteen I joined the Civil Defence Messengers. Proper uniform now! In the event of an air raid I was supposed to get on my bike and pedal up Harehills Lane to a telephone communications centre and take messages from there to wherever! Thank goodness I was never called upon to carry out this duty. For a start off, my greatcoat was so heavy and nearly touched the ground and I couldn't get on my bike, alone pedal it up the hill.

We had a place down in Burmantofts, there was a big congregation building there. We'd wait there and if there was an air raid, we'd go out. We never had it that bad in Leeds. In the event of an air raid I was supposed to get on my bike and pedal up Harehills Lane to a telephone communications centre and take messages from there. Thank goodness I was never called. My new greatcoat was so heavy and nearly touched the ground, so I couldn't get on my bike, let alone pedal up the hill. We never had a bad callout, really. We were just on guard.

We used to go dancing to Mark Holtman's. The gent that taught me how to dance there was a right short fellow, and I was right tall. When a picture featured in *The Evening Post*, they cut me off. I'm not sure if it was because I was the only one wearing socks. My mum knitted them for me. All the other girls wore stockings, but you needed coupons for those!

At the age of 17, I was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in Khaki. My mum went round the street telling neighbours: "Our Vera has joined up, Hitler's got no chance." Why did I join up? It was the times, it was just what you did. It was good to be part of something and you hoped to help the war effort. I met lots of people, travelled around England, I'd do it all again. I never had any second thoughts, I was in, that was it.

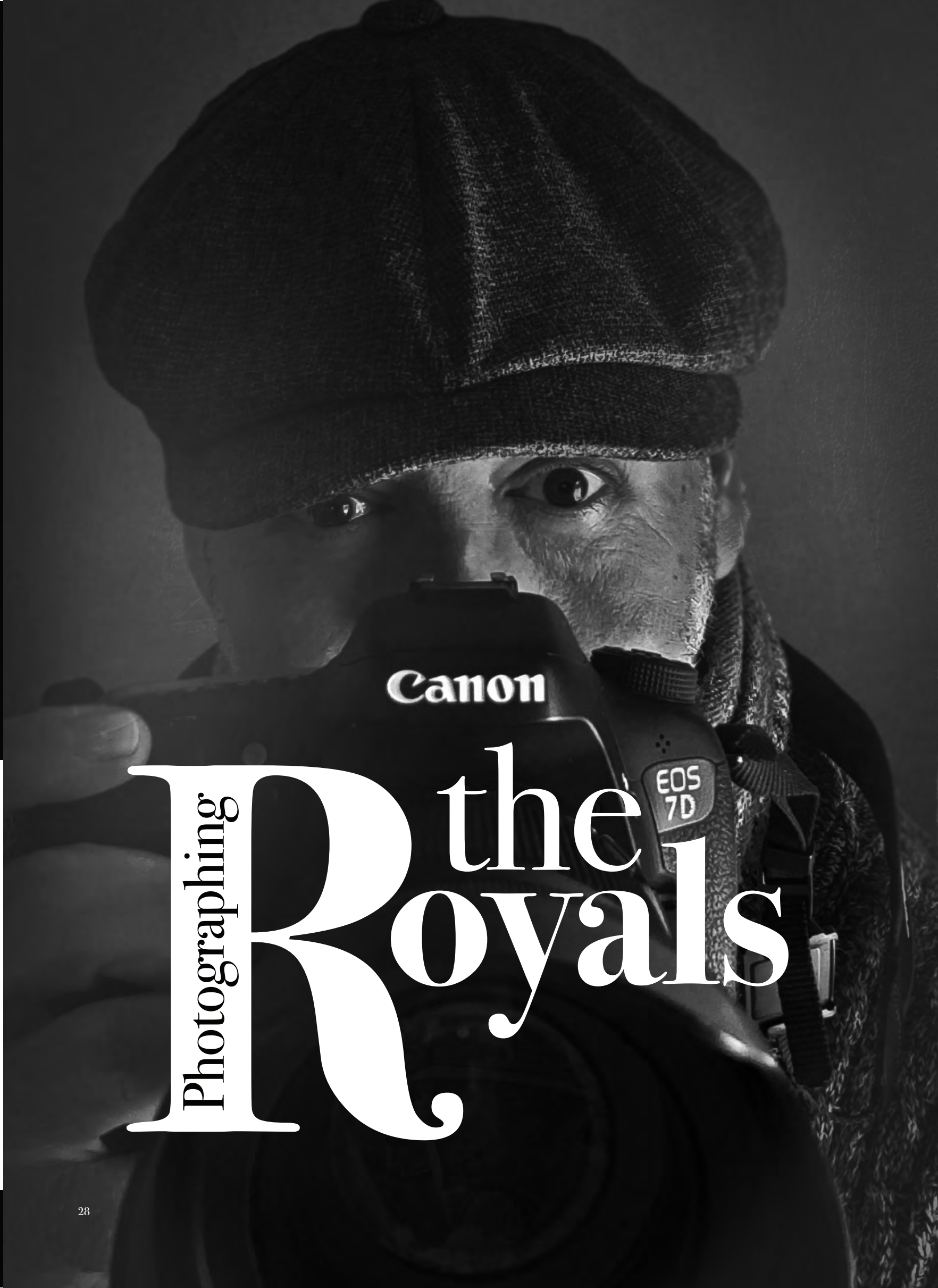


King George and Queen Elizabeth visited Birmingham. I was in charge of keeping the crowd back for the Queen. She didn't talk to me. I was there because I'd been chosen to stand guard. She didn't exactly say, "Oh hi Vera, nice to meet you!". But it felt very special.

After a few months I joined the military police at Redcap (1945), I did that for 3 years. "I was in my early 20s by then, and then I met a military policeman, Arthur Merrey. After the military police I got married and had four children. I now have children, grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren. There are 33 of them! One of my great grandsons has just joined the army.

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Canon

EOS 7D

Photographing  
**R** the  
Royals



“THE QUEEN WAS ALWAYS LOVELY TO SEE, AND HER BRIGHT COLOURS MADE HER STAND OUT IN A CROWD

*Queen Elizabeth II is one of the most photographed people on the planet. But who takes the pictures? We go behind the lens to meet a Leeds-based photographer who spends his life photographing the Royals.*

Photographer Paul Ratcliffe says he’s “happiest behind the camera”, making “happy memories”. Paul spends a good proportion of his time in the streets of cities and towns across the UK, waiting to catch a glimpse of a member of the Royal Family. One day he might be at York Minster, photographing Princess Anne; the next day he could be in Manchester, capturing William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Paul’s interest in the Royals began when he was a child in the 1970s and continues to this day. Now 50, Paul is naturally at ease behind the camera, but kindly agreed to share both his photographs but something of his background and motivations.

#### **What started your interest in the Royal Family?**

I was 7 years old when, at the end of the school term, our teacher gave every pupil a poster. It was a lucky dip – you didn’t choose which poster you got. The poster I picked out of the box was one of the Queen and Princess Margaret as little girls. It got me asking my parents questions - about who the Royals were, their history, that sort of thing. My mum was always a keen monarchist, so my interest was passed down, I guess. Plus I loved all the pomp and pageantry.

In 1982, aged 10 years old, Princess Alexandra visited a local centre near where I lived. I went with my mum to see her, but I stood so far back she was just a blip in the distance amongst all the tall heads! I saw the cars getting ready to leave, so I ran down to the road with my football under my arm, to wave goodbye. She waved directly right back at me. You can imagine how chuffed I was!

Our local school was taken (with thousands of other children) to greet the Prince and Princess of Wales on a visit to Roundhay Park in Leeds. They arrived by helicopter. The photograph I took was really fuzzy, but it didn’t put me off. Sadly, I lost that photo in a house-move. I used to carry a small camera that took 110 film, which is now quite obsolete. I’d snap away and when I saw I’d taken one great photograph, I wanted to get better ones. Thankfully the camera is now much improved!



### **Where has your photography taken you?**

I've travelled quite a bit – mostly in England. From the north-east to Berkshire. My firm favourites include regular events like Trooping the Colour in June, when the Queen's official birthday is celebrated. This event is famous for the Red Arrows flying over the balcony. I also love informal events like the Royal Windsor Horse Show. And I go along to many walkabouts all over the country.

### **What is it like to photograph the Royals?**

When I tell people about which Royals I have seen or photographed, they often ask, "Do they know you?" It's like anyone that you see many times, you do become a familiar face. Royal photography can be compared to sports photography, I guess. You have to be quick, think about what opportunities there are, what's the best place to stand, and how to dress for the weather. There's also the long wait. You'll be there a few hours (in all weathers) for literally a few seconds! But it's all worth it.

In the old days of negative film, you had to be choosy what photos you took. There were 24 or 36 photos on a film. Now, in digital times, you take whatever number of photos you want. But there's a part of me that still misses the thrill of seeing what, if any, photos came out from a roll of negative film when the photos dropped through the letterbox.

### **Have any of your Photographs been published?**

Yes, I've been lucky to have had two books of my photographs published (1993 & 2011) both entitled *Royal Encounters*. I've also had postcards use my images, and they've been used on commemorative china. This year I was delighted and honoured to be asked to have some of my images used for the Isle of Man's Jubilee stamps. I still pinch myself when I see them. I'm a small fish in a very big pond. So many photographs are taken of the Royals. Also this year Kensington Palace in London is staging a large Royal Photography exhibition, and after a request for photographers to submit images, I was delighted that some of mine were chosen. I can't wait to see them in-person in the exhibition!

### **Who is your favourite Royal?**

That's a really difficult one to answer! The late Queen Mother was always lovely. She always knew where to smile for the camera and was the nation's grandmother. The Duchess of Cornwall is a wonderful lady. She will be a wonderful Queen Consort when that time comes. Princess Alexandra is my favourite Princess. Gracious lady with a wicked dry humour. The Prince of Wales – always great to see him. William and Catherine are two naturals. Catherine is a natural with the crowds.

The Queen was always lovely to see, and her bright colours made her stand out in a crowd. It must be daunting still to go up to a large crowd, start small talk when all you see is a barrage of cameras and mobile phones.







### What are your memorable royal events?

Golden Jubilee 2002. Standing on The Mall, as the Queen passed in the Gold State Coach, whilst a choir sang 'Zadok the Priest'. Still gives me a goosebumps moment. On a sadder note, one day stands out. A month earlier: an April afternoon in 2002, when the Queen Mother's coffin was moved from the Chapel Royal to lie in state at Westminster Hall, London. I'd seen the cortege pass by Horse Guards Parade. Later, queuing for hours to pay my respects. As I came into the hall, ahead of me was a scene that was almost eerily magical. The catafalque (her coffin) was lit from above, on a dais, whilst four soldiers stood guard at each corner. There was a changeover of the soldiers, and I was asked to pause by the coffin. Then the Yeoman of the Guard (Beefeaters) processed into view past me to take up their position. Such a solemn moment and one that will stay with me.

There is usually one funny moment somewhere on every royal visit! One memory that springs to mind quickly. Princess Diana was visiting a children's centre in Thurnscoe, South Yorkshire in 1993. I was on the wrong side of the road, so ran with all my might to catch her later on the walkabout route. I stood next to this chap who, when the Princess came to him, proudly showed her a tray of raw chicken thighs he'd won in a raffle. He offered them to her for her dinner! She politely refused saying she thought he would enjoy them more.

### What do think of the Queen?

The Queen has been a constant in all our lives. Now aged 96, she is a truly remarkable and inspirational lady. Throughout her Reign she has put duty first. The speech she made aged 21 in South Africa in 1947, resonates so much today:

"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."

Words that meant so much to her then and now. The warmth and affection she has been shown as she travelled the UK (and particularly on her many visits to North and to Yorkshire) is genuine. Crowds as far as the eye could see. In this Platinum Jubilee year, the respect and esteem she is held in remains the same.

### Did you ever meet Prince Philip?

Yes. Quite a remarkable man. I remember he came to open the renovated Kirkgate Market in Leeds in 1995 and was on his usual cheeky form! The Lord Mayor at the time was a lady, and as she escorted him around her went past a clothing stall that had nightdresses hanging up. "Is that the kind of thing you buy?" he asked her - to much laughter. Then he saw a sandwich stall. He pointed to some baguettes and joked to a group of elderly ladies, "They're big ones, aren't they?" His cheeky humour always shone through!



**Top** – A rare photo of Paul Ratcliffe (left) behind the camera.

**Left** - Princess Diana visiting South Yorkshire, 1993  
© Paul Ratcliffe

**Right** – The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge  
© Paul Ratcliffe





**“THE  
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### Where will you be for Jubilee weekend?

Hopefully, in London! I've done Golden and Diamond Jubilee. This last two years, since the Pandemic took hold of the world, has been difficult for so many. So returning to normality can make you feel apprehensive. I'm sure many of your readers will understand those feelings. The London extended Jubilee events look to be a magnificent 4 days of celebration. Trooping the Colour; the National Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral; the Concert at the Palace; the Pageant on The Mall. Let's just hope the Queen is well enough to attend one, or all of the events. A time for us all to say thank you to her for 70 amazing years.



**Left, top** - The Queen Mother's Funeral Cortege, London, 2002 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Left, bottom** - The Queen, Leeds Civic Hall, 2002 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Centre, top** - The Duke of Edinburgh, Leeds Kirkgate Market, 1995 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Centre, bottom** - The Queen, St Aidans Church Harehills, 1990 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Right, top** - Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall at Leeds Grand Theatre, 2009 © Paul Ratcliffe

**Right, bottom** - Prince Charles at Leeds Grand Theatre, 2009 © Paul Ratcliffe





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GOD

save THE

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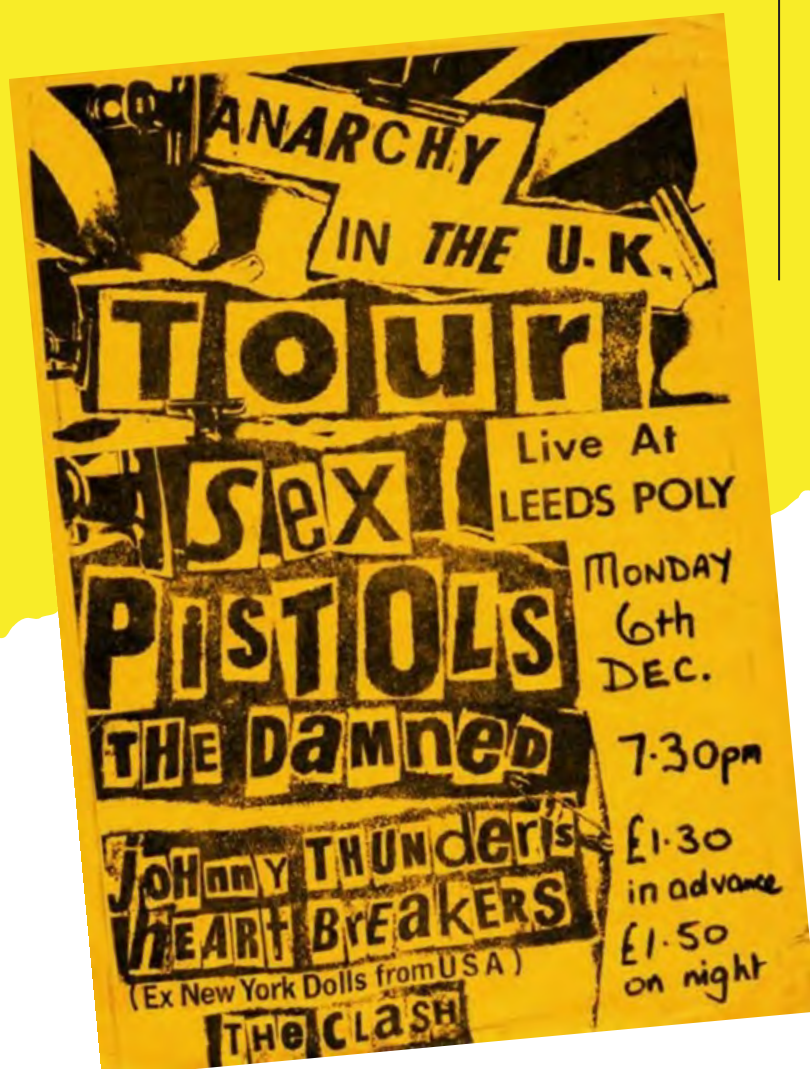
*Many of us will remember the Sex Pistols' anarchist riposte to the Silver Jubilee in 1977. But who remembers their infamous gig at Leeds Polytechnic a year earlier? We go back in time and remember an era of punk, rebellion and sticking two fingers up at the Establishment.*



In 1977, the United Kingdom was gripped by Royal Fever. The Silver Jubilee saw millions of people enjoying street parties up and down the country. But not everyone was on board. At the same time as the Jubilee, a new musical subculture had taken root: punk. The Sex Pistols represented the epitome of punk; rude, anti-establishment young people, desperate to give people with power a poke in the eye.

In May 1977, the Sex Pistols released their single, "God Save the Queen". And it caused a riot.

The song took the National Anthem and "punkified" it for a new generation. It was filthy, disrespectful, noisy and potentially slanderous. Young people loved it. Now some of those young people have grown up and look back on their attitudes with wry fondness. Leeds resident Jean Simmons was a midwife, living in Suffolk at the time. "We had the day off, recalls Jean, when we caught up with her at Leeds Playhouse. "We were in our twenties and we thought, 'Ugh, the Queen's Jubilee? What's that all about?' We wanted to get away from it all, but everywhere we went, every village had the bunting out, they were having parties. One of our friends had an old car – a Wolseley – and we drove around Suffolk, dropping into lots of villages where people were supporting the Jubilee. We blasted out "God Save the Queen" by the Sex Pistols. It was our little rebellion!"



The song may have been popular at the time, but it certainly didn't go down well with the more traditional parts of society. It was highly controversial for its view of the Queen as presiding over a fascist regime. The press viewed certain lyrics as very offensive. But was it a political rebellion? Or was it just a publicity stunt? The band denied they were in it for the money, but the song got to Number 2 in the Charts and cemented The Sex Pistols' reputation for decades to come. What did the band really think? Interviewed later on, Johnny Rotten said, "You don't write God Save The Queen because you hate the English Race. You write a song like that because you love them and you're fed up with them being mistreated." Glenn Matlock (who co-wrote the song) said, "Something needed to happen to stir things up back then. It was all quite turgid."

The Sex Pistols hijacking the Silver Jubilee may have been the high watermark of punk publicity, but where did it all begin? The band first came to the public's attention the year before, in December 1976. This was the month of their infamous appearance on the Bill Grundy TV show and of the subsequent gig at Leeds Polytechnic. The Pistols' chat-show performance, in which they swore and were generally rambunctious, generated huge headlines. The gig in Leeds capitalised on the publicity and it went down in history as the concert at which punk went mainstream.

Playing in Leeds wasn't straightforward. Many of the Sex Pistols' gig were being cancelled, after interventions from local bigwigs. On London councillor described them as "unbelievably nauseating" and ensured they didn't play in his district. Things were no different in Leeds. Antony Ramm, local historian at Leeds Libraries, says, "college officials and local Councillors expressed serious reservations about the group's arrival in the city. It's probably no surprise to hear that the band didn't keep to those demands that they cut out the swearing while playing at the Polytechnic."

The gig generated hysterical headlines in local papers. One read, "Abysmal Performance of Depravity Rock." Such hyperbole only played into the bands' hands: they sold out the Leeds concert and continued to pack halls across the UK. But the tone of the media coverage continued to be unpleasant. "The language of a cultural war was fought with the kind of venom and ferocity that has only now returned to public discourse," says Antony Ramm.

Was the gig at Leeds Polytechnic an iconic moment? Over the page we hear from Stephen Green, who helped organise the event – and can remember what actually occurred onstage and off. As Stephen says, "Nobody knew what punk sounded like before 1976." The Leeds gig was the first chance people had to hear the Sex Pistols live.

Whatever your opinion of the punk scene, it's a part of modern history that looms large in the memories of older people in the UK. Was punk any more than offensive T-shirts, safety pins and spitting? Find out what really happened as we look back to 6th December 1976.



*In 1976, Stephen Green was an Social Secretary at Leeds Polytechnic. He'd come to Leeds to study, but also to go to gigs. Stephen was in the ideal position to meet musicians and help programme bands. Now retired, Stephen retains happy memories of backstage life in 1970s Leeds. Below, Stephen shares his story of the Sex Pistols' infamous gig at Leeds Poly.*

**I** left school at 16, because I wanted to work and not go to college. I became a trainee accountant and did a day-release scheme. It was in a factory that made women's underwear. I was made redundant within a year, so then went to work at Imperial Leather in Salford. I was there 3 years. I realised that the best way to qualify as an accountant was to go to college full-time. I had friends who were at Leeds University and they used to get me into gigs free. I saw bands like Queen and Roxy Music at the University. One weekend, I went over to Leeds Poly to see my favourite group, Stackridge. I thought, "This is the life!"

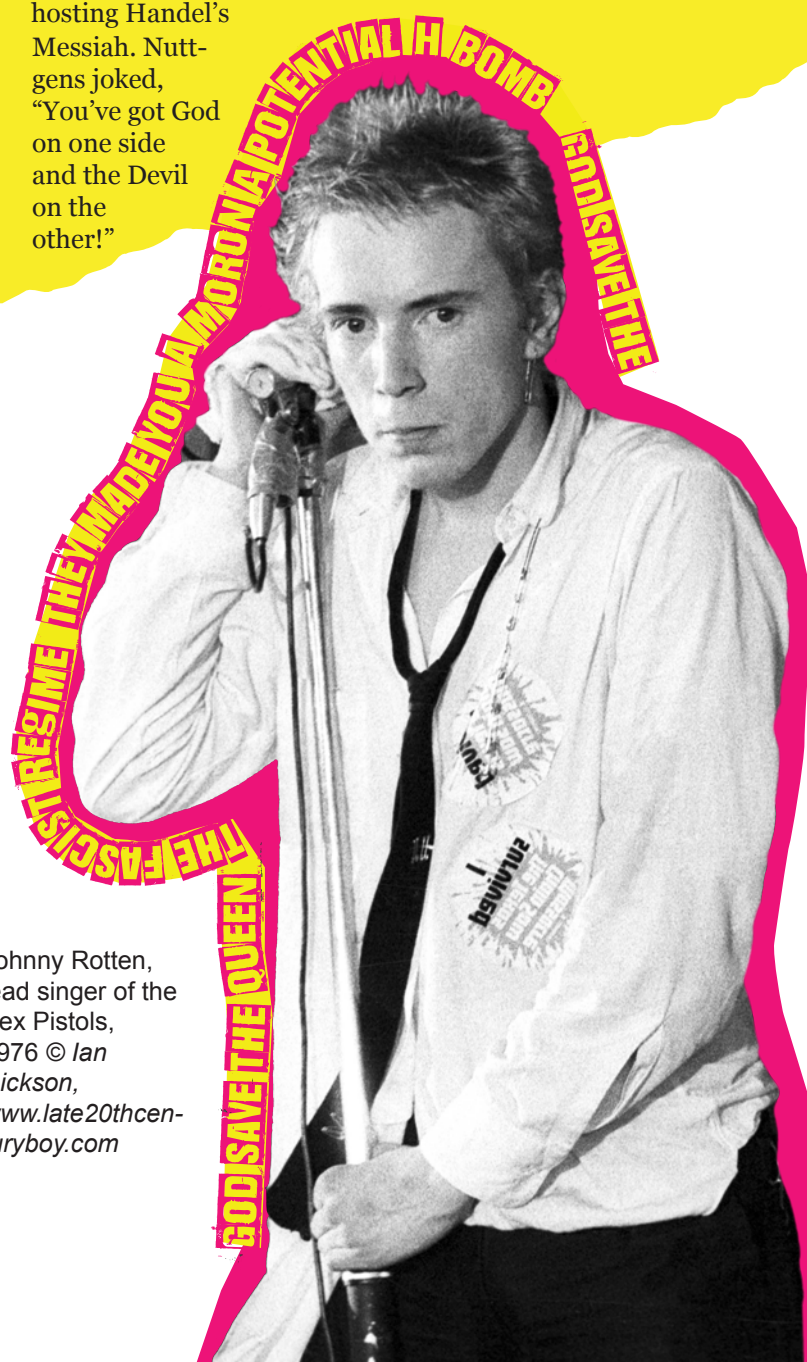
In 1975, I came over to Leeds Poly to study accountancy full-time, but with the intention of getting involved with student entertainments. In my second year I became social secretary – and that was when we had the Sex Pistols on. There was a full-time sabbatical officer who was responsible for entertainment. I was still studying, but I was on the team too. During the first term, we were using outside promoters, which is unusual for student promoters. Most colleges, they'll pay a fee for a band and most of the time they'll lose money. It was difficult for the Poly to compete with the University. Our capacity was 650, there's was 2200. But luckily, we worked very closely with them. If they were offered a band and couldn't host the gig, we know the band would come to us. In my first term, we had bands like Manfred Mann's Earth Band and The Strawbs. Pretty good for a small college.

By this time, punk rock was being seen in the papers. But nobody knew what the music was like, because nobody had released any records. We were approached by a promoter to do the "Anarchy in the UK" – which included 4 bands. Obviously, they were after venues where they could fit the bands in. We were one of the few colleges that time to be approached. At that time, the headlining band was to have been The Ramones. The Sex Pistols were on the bill, but not the headliners. Sadly, the Ramones never came. Then the Pistols were signed to EMI and tour was all set to go. The other bands ended up being The Damned, The Clash and Johnny Thunder's Heartbreakers.

Then, there was the Bill Grundy show. Queen were supposed to go on the show, but pulled out at the last minute. So they were replaced by another EMI band – the Sex Pistols. Of course, that's well-known history now. It all kicked off! The programme was only shown in the London area. We only knew what was happening, because the following morning, it was the front-page story of all the national newspapers. "The Filth & The

Fury" in the Daily Mirror. It was a massive story. After that, a lot of the venues on the tour – council-owned venues – decided they ought to review whether they ought to let the concert go ahead. Because there were lots of filthy, swear-y young men. They hadn't a clue what it actually was! One by one, all the shows were cancelled. But the Leeds Poly was our hall. And being students, we were the same age, we thought, "Brilliant!" What great publicity – and in fact, it did sell out. The promoter sent up a guy to put up posters but he was stopped by the police – he was probably fly-posting in the wrong places. So the promoter dropped off a bundle of posters at my flat, and I then went out and put them up in our usual sites. Had I kept those posters, they'd be worth thousands now!

The concert was on a Monday. I'd gone away for the weekend, to see my girlfriend at Lancaster University. But I got picked up at the station on Sunday night by Ian Coxon, who was Deputy President and used to be editor of the student newspaper. His job was to handle the press and publicity. He said, "You won't believe what's going on. We're inundated with press from all over the country!" The director of Leeds Polytechnic was a chap called Patrick Nuttgens – and he gave a supportive interview. At the same time, in another part of Leeds Poly, they were hosting Handel's Messiah. Nuttgens joked, "You've got God on one side and the Devil on the other!"



Johnny Rotten,  
lead singer of the  
Sex Pistols,  
1976 © Ian  
Dickson,  
[www.late20thcenturyboy.com](http://www.late20thcenturyboy.com)



The venue was full of the press. Music press, national press. The paying punters and some of the students just didn't know what to expect. They basically just stood around, thinking, "What the Hell's going on here?!" It was pretty exciting. By this time The Sex Pistols had released their first single (Anarchy in the UK) so people did know what the music sounded like. I wouldn't say the gig was a rip-roaring success, because a lot of the people in the hall were just press people, waiting for something bad to happen, for something to kick off. There were a few people who knew that you could dress up like punk rockers.

I have a cutting from the local paper that says:

*"The great Sex Pistols myth exploded in Leeds last night, when a vile disgusting show was met with scorn, derision and hoots of laughter from scores of fans. Many walked out on the dreadful debacle at the Polytechnic and those who stayed were told by lead singer Johnny Rotten, "You're just a load of dummies, you're dead!"*

This was December 1976. By the following May, we did a week of punk rock, with the Clash and the Ramones and Talking Heads. And the same two journalists who wrote this feature, saying it was disgusting – within 5 months, they were saying, "Isn't brilliant that Leeds is the best place for punk rock!" That gives you an idea of the time.

People wanted something to go wrong. But it was just a typical rock gig. Except for the fact that they weren't brilliant musicians. I mean, Johnny Thunder, he's been in the New York Dolls. So obviously, he knew how to play. At the end of the day, though, it was a rock gig where the musicians dressed up as punks. Had it been a year later, everyone would have been pogo-ing like billy-o. Because they then knew how to behave in a punk gig. Within 5 or 6 people months, knew exactly what it was. People would copy others, jump about, spit at the bands, all that. It became a fashion.

It's not a big hall and, at the time, we only had a very small dressing room. To get 4 bands in there would have been impossible. There was another room that was part of another college that we used instead. My job on the night was to stay in that room, look after the bands, make sure it all went smoothly, make sure everyone got on stage – and make sure they didn't wreck it. They were totally well-behaved, really. We all got on - we were their age! They were pissed off about the cancellations and just wanted to play. It was a bit of a laugh. They lived up to their portrayal. I remember talking to Glenn Matlock from the Sex Pistols. He had no money, so I gave him 50p. Which doesn't sound a lot – it's about £4 in today's money. I've since reminded him and he said he'd buy me a pint!

After the gig, we all went back to the Dragonara Hotel, where the bands were staying. The Leeds Poly team had a meeting. Obviously, with all the gigs being cancelled, the bands wanted to play again at Leeds Poly the following night. Unfortunately, the hall was being used for Handel's Messiah! Instead they went to the Electric Circus in Manchester.

I was then – and still am – more into Prog Rock. But I just loved live music. To me, punk rock wasn't that different from other music. I worked at a gig for Black Sabbath over in Bradford, humping their gear around. And that gig wasn't that much different than punk – it was just noise! Most punks were just rockers who had cut their hair into a particular style that was fashionable.

I'm aware that the gig had an impact. I know The Mekons formed their band after they saw the Sex Pistols. Green Gartside from Scritti Politti was there – he was a student. I don't know for sure if they were at the gig, but the two guys who formed Soft Cell were Leeds students at the time. And so were Gang of Four. They were all there, they

all wanted to know what was going on, see what all the fuss was about. It was good fun! At the time, you never thought it would be legendary. It was just another gig. The added thing about having all the publicity just made it more fun.

The band was into the music. Malcolm McLaren was into the "myth of punk" and about publicity. He created the look of the Sex Pistols. He did all the interviews. I think it was a way of him promoting himself and his shop – the fashion and all that. For a short time, it was the thing to be into. But it didn't last long. The Sex Pistols always found it very difficult to get venues to book them. Not the other bands, just them. Especially when Glenn Matlock left, and they brought in Sid Vicious. They got an image of being a difficult band, there could be problems. Problems with

the fans too – they might riot and all that.

The God Save the Queen thing was a huge publicity thing for Malcolm McLaren. That put a lot of people off.

"They're calling the Queen a moron!" Which they weren't, if you look at the lyrics. But the press just turned against them. They got dropped by EMI, picked up by A&M - then dropped by them! They then signed for Virgin – well, it was perfect for Richard Branson, who loved all that publicity.

What the gig did for Leeds Poly was great. All the punk rock bands wanted to play our venue. I was told by an agent that Leeds Poly was always one of the first venues he'd book in for tours. So it meant we had some brilliant gigs. As the bands got bigger, they went on to play Leeds University, which was a bigger venue.

But they started with us at the Poly. ■

They got an image of being a difficult band, there could be problems. Problems with the fans too – they might riot and all that.



The Sex Pistols perform live in 1976  
© Ian Dickson,  
[www.late20thcenturyboy.com](http://www.late20thcenturyboy.com)





# The Disco Queen



*Susan describes herself as a “drag DJ”.  
She plays records, entertains the crowd and hosts an  
alternative bingo session in Leeds City Centre.*

*Mally Harvey meets Susan to find out more.*

Written By: **MALLY HARVEY** Photography: **JONATHAN TURNER**

**S**usan Roberts has performed in drag for many years and currently works at The Viaduct Showbar on Lower Briggate. Growing up, Susan was known as Ian, but now goes by her female name at work – and at home. “Even my wife calls me Susan,” she says. “Unless I’m in the bad books. Then it’s Ian!”

Susan welcomed the Shine team into the Viaduct, a deceptively large venue on Call Lane. The moment you walk in, you’re struck by the warm atmosphere and friendly attitude of both staff and regulars. We were introduced to owner Michael Rothwell. Susan ascribes Michael’s positive attitude to the welcome people receive. The Viaduct is a maze of different spaces, including a courtyard and an upstairs VIP seating area where shows can be viewed in royal comfort! Susan knows everyone at the club, and everyone knows her. The Viaduct seems to be one big happy family and newcomers are welcomed with open arms.

The Viaduct’s main entertainment takes place in the evenings: drag acts perform every night of the week. The performers are, on the whole, younger. However, during the daytime, Susan takes the spotlight and caters for a more mature crowd. “Sassy Susan’s Daytime Sesh” features bingo, quizzes and games, alongside cheap pints and cash prizes. More than anything, it’s a social space, for older gay, lesbian and trans people to gather, knowing they’ll be safe and welcome. A couple of men at the next table peruse the newspapers and tell us they “only come for a chat”; another woman travels in from another town every day to be there. It’s an LGBTQ haven.

Susan guides us to a quiet table at the back of the club and begins to tell us about the Viaduct’s plans for the Jubilee Weekender. “The bar will be filled with Union Jacks,” she says; the party will be as patriotic as any Coronation Street Party from 1953. They may even spill out on the street if they can manage it! And there’s apparently a special appearance from the Queen herself! As Susan talks, her passion for The Viaduct is clear – so that’s where we started our conversation...







### **How did you get involved with the Viaduct?**

My mother and father were licensees here back in 1964. And we all lived here as a family, in this building. It was a Tetley's house at the time. It was a normal, everyday pub back then. Mum and Dad ran it and me and my sister lived here with them. So some of my early life was here. I always knew I liked dressing in female clothing, but it had to be a secret then. My parents didn't know what I did, or what I liked until very late. Then they were fine with it. The Viaduct used to be a Leeds United bar. It changed hands on the Friday and by the Monday it was a gay bar. We still get Leeds supporters coming in. Groups come from different places.

### **How did you become a Drag Queen?**

I was working for a major telecommunications company. I started work as a trainee computer operator – it's all on our phones now. The early Amstrad were 64K and now we have 200mgb and all the rest. Then I moved onto more customer-based roles; I like talking and meeting people. I like to think I could help people. At the same time, I used to do a lot of work with the Trans community in Leeds, and we did a lot of events. About 15 years ago I met the owner of the Viaduct club, Michael Rothwell, he basically tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I want you to come and work for me, full-time." I said "What?!" I had been doing some part-time DJing for him on Fridays and Saturdays, but he offered me a full-time job. I had a couple of meetings with him and agreed to come here, and I have been here ever since. That wasn't the start of my career as a Drag Queen, because as I say I was involved with the transgender community so I used to go out regularly with them. We were friends, had meetings and organised events. Back in those days, Leeds wasn't as open and as welcoming as it is today. We used to meet at the Old Red Lion on a Tuesday night and have a good night. There were no changing facilities, so some people would get changed in the gents' toilets. We'd have a quiz night, then we'd all go back to our normal lives.

### **So coming here allowed you to express yourself how you wanted to?**

Yes, as a drag DJ. I was apprehensive at first but, yes, everyone was welcoming. So good. Michael knows what he wants from the place, he's not an in-your-face boss. He tells you how he wants things to flow, then he lets you get on with it. People have a lot of freedom. The daytime clientele is similar to a normal old-fashioned boozier or pub. Things change on a night-time with flamboyant people, with drag cabaret acts on stage. The staff are encouraged to dress how they want, although they do have a uniform. We do theme nights; it's a fun place. I met my wife here. It works for us, no problem. The Viaduct is a very welcoming place, all religions, all casts, all genders, all ages: it's open for everybody. We have people from aged 18 up to their 70s. People can be who they want to be, where they want to be. It is promoted across schools now. A lot of our customers, the older ones in particular, talk about the old days when they wanted to

go out and meet someone, they had to go to a door with a little hatch. They had to knock on the door and lift the hatch, look at you - and if you didn't "fit", you didn't get in. The internet and other technologies have made things easier. And of course, a change in the law which was a big thing. Some of the older clients can tell you some stories about aversion therapy in the hospitals for gay men. One man I know was forbidden from going to the funeral of his son. He was told, "We don't want your sort here." Awful times.

### **Tell me what it was like, having to manage all this stigma when you were younger?**

It was secret. In the early days, it had to be a secret, it's easier now. When there is a trans event on down here, you will see hundreds of people walking about how they want, everywhere. The older gay people here tell me you didn't come out until after 9 o'clock. You had to wait until it was dark. There was that much bigotry and prejudice against them. That still exists, of course, although it has got better. Its better in the city. I know a customer who comes in from a village and no one knows what he does and prefers. He can't share it there, he just couldn't tell them. We have people who come in by train and they have heard derogatory comments about the club on the train. So working here means I can be myself. It's been an open door and my family support that.

### **What do you do specifically at the Viaduct?**

I do a daytime session on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. We do games of bingo - a lot of the clientele is older. It was Michael's idea to put on the bingo. People enjoy the banter. It's like a little community; they have their own Facebook group where they all chat. After 6, there is a change, the younger and middle-aged population come in. We have big show on Sundays: cabaret, courtyard party - and of course there's Leeds Pride. The street gets shut off and there are hundreds of people here then.

I do normal daytime music on Saturday from the 1950s through to modern. Lots of Rock n' Roll, Northern Soul. I just tailor it to suit the audience. I'm the only DJ in Leeds that takes requests from the floor. It's about the enjoyment of the customers, not what I want to play but its about what they want to hear. Michael likes things to be fun, enjoyable and so people have a right good time. Then they go and tell their friends and the word spreads, that's the aim. Darryl Hurst was one of the directors - sadly now passed - he wanted the Viaduct to be like a fairground. So, you came in the door, and the more you advanced into the venue, the more attractions there were. We can split the venue off, so that different events take place in different areas. The little bar at the side can be used for smaller parties and the courtyard is fine if people want to sit out in the sun, have a drink and a chat. The stage area gets busy and full when shows are on. Then there's the upstairs VIP area where people can watch the shows, but because it's got that huge TV screen, it can be used for film events. We have one going on at present, "Mama



Bear's Drag Race" – it's like Ru Paul's Drag Race. The finals are next week. It's very vibrant, with a wide cross section of the community.

**What happened here during Lockdown?**

We carried on but not in an open capacity. We did live broadcasts from here, within the guidelines as we got permission to do that. As things tightened up, we moved to our own homes and did the broadcasts from there. So, I would do a daytime show and the Drag Queens who are rehearsing now would do an evening show. As they all live in the same apartment, they did it from there. We just kept everyone in the loop. The company put everyone on furlough, kept everyone's jobs. It gave people a lot of loyalty and a good feeling.

**What about your future?**

I'm 60 now. I was hoping to retire at 65, but the government have decided differently! So I'll go on as long as they'll have me. Who knows what the future is for the Viaduct? That depends on Michael. We've had a few refurb's since I came, but Michael is a visionary, so who knows what's next. I love Leeds and want to promote it from all angles. Leeds has an amazing history and architecture. If only people would look up! In 1640-something there was a Civil War battle out there on Briggate! It's been a Roman Garrison - all sorts.



**My daughter lives with her wife in Vancouver. They're very happy together there, but when she lived in London, she suffered a lot of abuse.**

Yeah, that's happened to a lot of people, but it's got better here in the UK. There is more acceptance and understanding. The atmosphere here is inclusive. You have a family with some bad experiences, so I can only imagine being 18 years old and not having a clue what direction you are going in. Feeling very alone and isolated. So coming through that door must be a massive step. People need to feel welcome and safe. They need to know they can meet people who will talk to them and let them develop at their own pace. This is how everywhere should be, you shouldn't be apprehensive about going anywhere. Just walk into The Viaduct, have a look, and if you don't like it, go away and think about it. First time can be very unnerving for anybody. I just hope they go away thinking they have found a place they can be themselves. After all, we talk about a wide variety of interests and subjects. I like old diesel trains - and I go magnet fishing with a group of friends from here. Michael's father got me in to it. We got some magnets out of some old speakers and had a go with them. Over the last 6 years it's become a big hobby in the UK. We go out treasure hunting in the rivers and canals. We find anything and everything: from nails dating back 400 years to, well, some naughty items, shall we say. Safes, cash boxes, jewellery, purses, wallets, ammunition, and guns. It's a lot more exciting than catching fish! We do liaise with the Police and Canal and River Trust. Recently there was a blue plaque to commemorate David Oluwale, a Nigerian man who was killed by the police in the 1960s. The plaque went missing, so the lads are trying to find it and retrieve it from the canal for the council. If we do find anything suspicious, we phone the police, cordon off the area and wait for the authorities to come. If it's ordinance, we send a picture to the MOD and they come and remove it. They always say they would rather be safe than sorry.

**I have a 12-year-old grandson who likes dancing and dressing up. What advice would you give him?**

I would tell him to be himself, enjoy being who you are and find your own way. If he needs support there is support out there. For over 16's, there's MESMAC. They give sexual health advice, testing and counselling and support. I hope this interview will reach a wider audience so people can see what we offer at the Viaduct. To everyone not just the LGBTQ community. The whole world is changing for the better. I'd like to end with a quote from Darryl Hurst. He always said this:

'WE'RE HERE, THE DOORS ARE OPEN, COME ON IN'

*"Sassy Susan's Daytime Sesh" takes place on Tuesday – Friday afternoons at the Viaduct. On Saturdays, Susan DJs from 2 – 8pm, playing music from the 60s – the 80s.*

*For more information on what's on at the Viaduct go to [www.viaductleeds.com](http://www.viaductleeds.com) or pop in at 11 Lower Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6ER.*



# A Right Royal Party

A royal celebration just isn't the same without a street party. Since the Coronation in 1953, many of us have pulled together, put out the flags and celebrated in style. Back then, you knew all your neighbours, everyone mucked in and communal parties were de rigueur.

We spoke to older people in Leeds about their memories of royal parties over the years. Many remember Coronation Day: crowding around tiny televisions; receiving mugs of sweets; and getting the day off school. People share their thoughts from across Leeds, and from all over the country. From villages to cities, from back-to-backs to mansions; however you lived, you celebrated the new Queen in a similar way.

However, it not just the Coronation. The Silver Jubilee, Royal Weddings – each are celebrated with parties and events. Those too young to remember the Coronation share their memories too.

However you're planning to celebrate this year's Platinum Jubilee, perhaps you'll find inspiration from remembering how we used to have a Right Royal Party.

A big thank you to all the older people at Leeds Playhouse, AVSED, Cross Gates Good Neighbours Scheme, Association of Blind Asians and Armley Helping Hands.



**Above** - Street party in full swing at Back Cross Flatts Place, Beeston, to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee, 1977  
© Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.

**Right** - Residents of Oak Street, Garforth celebrate the Coronation with a street party, 1953  
© Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.



*Brian*

We had the day off school. I remember going into Manston Park to kick a ball around. We didn't have a telly in '53! I come from a not so well-off family, so we didn't have the money for TVs and parties. But I enjoyed the freedom of a day off! My friend of mine was in the Coronation Choir – Michael Roberts, his name was.

*June*

It rained that day. It absolutely poured down. I lived in Wetherby then. We were all in fancy dress. I was 11. We had a party on the day and went to the pictures on the Saturday night. Mrs Smith had a telly and we all went to hers.

*Sylvia*

I'm from down South. I married a Londoner. I was in my 20s. I went down the Mall in the evening, because my fella was working. We lived in Surrey and I was working in the city. I was a machinist. We didn't have a party. You had to live round Poplar to have a proper street party. People think life in London was all like Call The Midwife! But it wasn't like that.

*Maggie*

I come from London. We had a party. I was 10. We had street parties, tables out in the streets, everything. I just remember being sat at the table, eating! I watched the Coronation on the telly. Her in her golden coach! We had an old black-and-white telly. A little, brown Bakelite one.

*Peter*

I was born in a street in Ipswich and anything like the Coronation was always celebrated in style. It was incredible. I'd hard to imagine it these days. There was such a sense of community spirit. We knew everyone in the street, so it was a communal party.

*Diana*

I had German Measles. I was poorly on VJ Day too! I seemed to miss all the parties. But I remember a tray full of cakes on buns that other people had made. I still remember that tray.

*Tony*

I was in London doing National Service at the time of the Coronation. Working in the War Office. We had an office overlooking Whitehall. Because of the celebrations, we were kicked out of our office so the officers could use it. I just went off to play golf!

*Mary*

I was 11 years old. I'm from Dunfermline. Everybody in the street made something. I do remember the scones – they weren't very good. A bit off! We all had our photographs taken. In Scotland it was a bit different. They were crowning her Elizabeth II but we Scots hadn't had an Elizabeth I. Some of them didn't recognise her. So for the Coronation, we were all given a bible and there was a page that said Elizabeth II - and some people tore that page out!





*Maureen*

We lived in back-to-backs and my grandma was the first in our street to get a telly. We all had seats outside, peering in through the living room window to watch it.

*Janet*

We got a tin of toffees in a glass – like a beer mug. We all got one – from the Council, I think. I watched it in my Auntie’s house. About 12 inches wide – and there were about 40 of us! It was lovely though. I remember they had a lot of the royal robes shown at Temple Newsam – my Dad took me to see them.

*Angela*

My Mam’s friend had a television. We all went over to theirs to watch it. It was a shocking day. I was about 9 and I was a load of trouble. I was bored.

*Margaret*

We were tiddlers when the Coronation happened. It was a very exciting moment. We were watching the only television in the village. We all crammed into one sitting room to see it. We all squealed! The hosts gave us tea and cake.

*Anne*

I was still at school and we got the day off. We had a street party. It was lovely. I was a teenager. We lived in a very old street down in Hunslet. We had all the bunting out and decorations. My brother lived next door and he had a huge stereogram – he was blasting out music! We didn’t have a TV, but I did manage to see it on one of our neighbours’ houses. Later in the week, we went to the cinema to see it. The Strand Cinema in Hunslet which is no longer there. I think they knocked it down. As I remember, it was in black and white. We had a bonfire in the evening. People all sat round the fire, telling stories about the war years, then dancing and having a sing-song. It was a great day.

**“WE GOT A  
TIN OF  
TOFFEES IN A  
GLASS – LIKE  
A BEER MUG.  
WE ALL GOT  
ONE – FROM  
THE COUNCIL**

*Sheila*

I was up in a hall at the top of the street where the scouts used to go. There were tables and balloons everywhere. Big streamers, jam sandwiches.

*Alec*

I was 11. We had a man on our street, he had a television. The house was full of kids watching the coronation. The following weekend he organised a coach trip to Blackpool to celebrate. I remember seeing Reg Dixon for the first time. I’ll never forget it. Seeing television for the first time and going to Blackpool in the same Coronation week.

*Valerie*

I used to go to St Mary’s School down Broadgate Lane. I remember going up to the new Benton Park School. They had races and we all got a mug of sweets. I still have that cup. I was in a skipping race – I was good at sports.

*Rita*

We lived in a close and the woman next door was the only one to have a telly. We all crowded round to watch it.



**Left** - A giant crown on a house in Cross Green to celebrate the Coronation, 1953 © Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.



**Right** - Bunting bedecks the High Street in Wetherby, 1977 © Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.  
© Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers





**Above** - Young residents take part in a street party in Sissons Crescent, Middleton, 1953 © Leodis/ Yorkshire Post Newspapers.

#### *Ken*

I went to a street party. My brother was there, in uniform. He was in the navy – he was sunk 3 times. Everybody worked together, tables in the middle of the street. A great day.

#### *Pat*

We lived in a fire station. We didn't have a television, but the firemen did. We were allowed to watch it on that. It was horrendous weather. I can really remember the carriage and thinking it was like Cinderella. We had mugs of sweets, the day off school.

#### *Maria*

I was brought up in a back-to-back and we had a street party. All tables down the street. I lived in Holbeck. The houses were knocked down years ago. Everybody in the street were like aunts and uncles.

#### *Mavis*

There was only one person in our street with a television. I can picture it now, a tiny thing in the corner of their room. Us kids were allowed in, a few at a time, just for 10 minutes each. I remember her pulling up in the big coach. Lovely. I was 7. I remember vividly that on Coronation Day, my brother and I had a row. My Dad had made us some whipping tops and my brother Tony, fighting over the red chalk. He put chalk all over my face and got a clap round the backside for it!

#### *Ann*

On June 1977, my (then) husband and I and our two young boys spent a week on Lindisfarne. Holy island in Northumberland was my most favourite spot both then and now. It was a very wet day. Even all those years ago, many visitors came to the island on day trips. But not too many actually stayed. Once the incoming tide had closed the causeway and cut off the island, all was much more peaceful. Just the islanders and those fortunate enough to be staying there

On the Jubilee Day, all came together in one huge, happy family. Yes, I remember the rain, but I also remember the long tables joined together down the main street. The plates piled high with sandwiches, sausage rolls and cakes, the big silver tea urn dispensing steaming hot tea - pop for the children. Red, white and blue bunting, red, white and blue boaters, crowns and party hats, Union Jacks, managing to flutter at least. I clearly recall – and can still feel - the warmth and friendliness of the Islanders' welcome. Lovely generous smiling people. Such a happy, damp day!

#### *Surinder*

I sat down and watched the Royal Wedding in 1981 on TV. I remember I rushed home from town and sat in front of the black and white TV with my husband and son.

Made sure we had everything to eat and we all loved it.



# The . Carnival Queen

*Sheila Howarth was crowned the  
Carnival Queen in 1989.*

*We meet her to look back on that memorable day and  
to look forward to the future of Carnival in Leeds.*

**F**riday 29th August 1989 was a special day for Sheila Howarth. It was her year to be crowned Queen of the West Indian Carnival in Leeds. Back then, Sheila was in her 30s and considered too old to be the Carnival Queen. But Sheila defied expectations and proved everybody wrong. She was declared Queen at the Queen Show at the West Indian Centre in Chapel-town. Her costume, 'Rainbow of Peace' was co-designed by Kam Sangra and took months to create. As the winning Queen, Sheila led the carnival parade on Bank Holiday Monday, which included 17 troupes from Leeds and across England.

Sheila now works at Leeds City Academy in Woodhouse. But her Carnival days are far from behind her. Sheila still designs and makes costumes every year. We meet Sheila at the school she works at to look back to 1989 and to talk about the power Carnival has to unite us.

## **How did you come to be Carnival Queen in 1989?**

I knew I wanted to be a Carnival Queen, but in 1989 I thought I was too old. I was in my mid-thirties. But I knew I wanted to do something, make a costume. I was taking to a friend of mine, Kam Sangra. He was Asian; the Asian community loved Carnival but had never actually got involved with it. So we decided we were going to do a costume together: him, his family and me. Our theme was "The Pot of Gold at the End of the Rainbow". The plan was just to make the costume with Kam, not for me to actually wear it. It took us months to make it. As time wore on, I got more and more involved with the making and when the time came for us to find a Queen, I said to Kam, "Forget it. I'm wearing that costume!" I'd spend all those weeks making it. I had to wear it myself.

## **What happened on the night of the Kings and Queens Show?**

Even on the night of the show, nobody knew I was going to wear the costume. Our costume was 15-foot-tall and







15-foot-wide. It was the first time that a costume moved. The tail was down like a peacock. All you saw was a long tail and a pot of gold. I was hidden in the pot. I came on stage dancing, the lid rose up – that was the sun. Then the door opened out of the rainbow and I came out as the gold Queen. Halfway down were the levers that I used to raise the 15-foot-high peacock tail. It was all the colours of the rainbow: red, gold, blue, orange, purple. The audience went crazy! Absolutely crazy.

### How did it feel to win?

From the time when we were making it, I knew we were on to a winner. The cheers on the night were fine, but my best moment was on Carnival Day itself. You're walking around in the parade, with the costume. Everyone appreciated who you were, what you've done. To bring moment was on Carnival Day itself. You're walking around in the parade, with the costume. Everyone appreciated who you were, what you've done. To bring everyone together. Leeds is multicultural city, so we wanted every different nationality coming together under one umbrella. And our theme was the rainbow, so that's exactly what we did. I made a costume for my sister two years before and she came first. And I'd made a number of others. I'd always come runner up, second, third. But 1989 was my year to be Queen. That was the important one.

### What did the experience of winning teach you?

It doesn't matter how old you are. It's not about you, about if you're 20 years old or weigh 5 stone. It's all about the costume. The costume won it. I always say to people, "You're never too old to follow your dreams – or do something you've always really wanted to do." Life is too short! You've got to get involved with it.



### When did you start going to Carnival?

I've been involved with the Carnival since I was 10. From the very first Carnival in 1967 to now. This year is our 55th anniversary. I've always been involved! I was born in Leeds; one of the first generation of Caribbeans to be born in Leeds. To me, everything was black and white. I knew nothing of colour. I couldn't even say if I was a black girl, a white girl a purple girl. I didn't know who I was, or what I was. I was a normal child. We just existed in black and white. The first Carnival was at Potternewton Park and I saw a vast amount of colour! Not just in costumes, but in people, in nationalities, the food, the smell, the music... The Carnival opened my eyes. And that's how I saw Leeds from that day on. Black and white became colourful.

### It's amazing what power the Carnival had on you.

I didn't know my background, my heritage. I saw things on TV about race wars in America. It didn't really affect me. That was the norm. Aged 10, it was normal to be called names, chocolate girl, whatever. You got used to it. Carnival taught me that I shouldn't get used to it. It's about showing people who you are and your identity. What you can give back to a community, sharing knowledge and experience. And that under the skin, we're all the same – just people. It's about sharing and appreciating others. You educate people from all over the world. It's a sharing experience. Being part of the Carnival is like being an action hero for a day. You are somebody else – not yourself, if that makes sense. You're free for that one day. You can be whatever you want, without anyone judging you. You in that costume – that's it.

### And you're still involved with Carnival now?

I still make costumes every single year. My focus these days is on costumes for young people. We do Princes and Princesses. We get a troupe of young people wearing costumes for the parade. I educate them with the skills they need, tell them about the history of Carnival. It's an open house workshop over the summer holidays. I believe young people should have the chance that I had to get involved and open up their world. We're doing Carnival at the school I work at. We're doing the National Children's Carnival and we're the first Northern school to be involved. We'll have 100 primary school kids, all dressed up in Carnival costumes.

### Tell us about your work at the Leeds City Academy.

I've been here 22 years. I've always worked in the community. This school had a reputation as rough – but it wasn't true. We moved out of the city centre and it

I'm 65 on  
Carnival Day!  
Every year it's  
my party.  
Age is just a  
number. You  
behave how you  
want to behave.  
I'm not going to  
be told what to  
do, just because  
of my age!



took time. It was hard. But now this school is a beacon for the community. Every child is respected. There are children from over 46 different countries and nationalities. We all accept each other. It's a family. We're here to help each other. I'm pastoral manager, so I deal with problems and talk to parents. I'm the mother – or the grandmother – to all the kids that never had their own. Everyone respects me in the school. I'm strict, but I have a heart inside. Kids feel like they can talk to me.

**You do you feel about getting older?**

I'm 65 on Carnival Day! Every year it's my party. Age is just a number. You behave how you want to behave. I'm not going to be told what to do, just because of my age! When I'm ready to retire or sit down, I'll do so. In the meantime, I'm going to party hard!



**And the Carnival will be returning in 2022, after 2 years off because of Covid?**

Everyone wants the Carnival. But this year is slightly different because we're not having the King and Queen show. We only found out we could have the Carnival late. It doesn't take a few days to make a costume, it takes months. Normally I start my King or Queen costume in September for the next August! So people will make individual costumes and we'll bring back some old costumes. But it'll be big! This year, people need to let their hair down. Have a party!

**What is the future of Carnival?**

The future is young people. If we don't give them the skills to make costumes and tell them about the history, Carnival will die. The founder, Arthur France, is 87 now. He gave me the skills. I'm nearly 65. I gave my daughter the skills – she's got her own troupe, in competition with me! And then I have my granddaughter, she's 10. So we need to keep it going. I will always be part of Carnival and I'll always help young people make costumes.

**You were Carnival Queen in your 30s. What about a Queen in their 60s?**

In Birmingham, they used to have grannies as Carnival Queens. We haven't done it in Leeds yet – but if there's a chance to do it, why not! We just need an older person with a younger mind! ■

*The next carnival is on Monday 29th August 2022.*





What if the Queen came to stay? Ruth Steinberg imagines a world where, exhausted by the burdens of state, Her Majesty takes a few days off for a city-break in Leeds...

# Ordinary but extraordinary

A Tall Tale by RUTH STEINBERG

I have a confession. Let me explain. People who know me think of me as an anti-royalist. I remember 1981, with the run up to the Royal Wedding of Charles and Diana. It was depicted as a fairy-tale romance, that had everyone in raptures. But I wasn't going to fall for that. Some of my friends and I made a big show of ignoring the spectacle: we had a picnic on Otley Chevin and wore badges that said, "Don't do it Di!" However, when I got home, I put on the telly, poured myself some bubbly and sat in awe, wonder and delight at the beauty, the pageantry, the whole show. That was the little secret that I kept from my friends.

Now, many years later, I still think it's unfair that some people have so much, when others struggle to put food on the table. And I think it is wrong that an accident of birth means everyone bows to you. But – secretly - I do like the pomp and circumstance that surrounds our own dear Queen.

I live quietly now, in Meanwood, Leeds. My family have all grown up and my partner died last year. I decided to let out my ground floor en-suite. Not only does it bring in some extra money, but it means I'm not always alone. The description is a quiet, homely place to get away from the stress of life, complete with homely food. I like to offer a meet-and-greet service at the station as a welcoming start to their stay. I've had some interesting visitors, but none as surprising as the last one. Checking my email, I saw there was an enquiry for a few days stay. It was from a "Betty Windsor" from London. She said she was not as young as she used to be. Her husband had died recently and she wanted to get away and be somewhere different. So, the booking was made.

When I met her at the train station, she looked familiar, but I couldn't quite place her. She was dressed in purple velvet jogging-bottoms and matching fleece. The whole outfit was topped off by a yellow silk headscarf. She handed me her leather suitcase and I noticed it had "ER

II" etched in gold. We went to the car. I opened the boot, put her case in and got in the driver's seat. She remained outside the car, standing as if waiting for something. It dawned on me she expected her door to be opened. I got out. She looked surprised when I opened the front passenger door, but she got in.

When we got to the house, it was the same again. I had to open the car door for her. The phrase, "What did your last servant die of?" came to my mind. I showed Betty to her room and left her to unpack. I put the kettle on for a welcome cup of tea. When Betty came into the kitchen, I asked how her journey was.

"We were very satisfied," she said.

I thought to myself, "that's a funny way of talking", but got on with making the tea.

I had run out of milk. I asked Betty if she would do me a favour and go to the corner shop just a few doors away and get a pint.

She paused and then said, "We would be happy to oblige."

I went to the front door, pointed out the shop and off she went. 10 minutes later the doorbell rang and when I answered it, there was Mr Arnold the shopkeeper, with Betty.

"Is this one of your guests?" he said. I nodded. "Well, she walked out of the shop with a pint of milk without paying. I followed her to your doorstep and when I challenged her, she just stared."

I felt my face turning red; I blurted out a sorry and went to get my purse to pay him. I thanked Mr Arnold, gave him the money, and hurried Betty inside.

Betty sat down and held her teacup in both hands. Her eyes started filling with tears, which dripped down on to the tablecloth. I offered her a paper tissue, but she pulled



out a fine lace one from the sleeve of her fleece.

"It's all too much," she said.

"The milk?" I asked.

"Not just the milk! I have had two birthdays every year for all my life. That's nearly two hundred birthdays! And now there is going to be another and they are making it such a big fuss. I've had enough. Now Philip has gone, I just want to be ordinary, but I don't know how to. I've never been shopping or paid for anything in my whole life."

She broke into sobs.

"Oh, my giddy aunt" I said to myself, "this Betty Windsor is HM Queen Elizabeth the Second". The QUEEN in my house! Pictures came to my mind of ceremonies, openings of parliament, the Christmas messages, walkabouts. All those hours of watching episodes from the Queen's life. Then I looked over at the woman in front of me. She looked so little and so sad.

When her sobs quietened down to sniffles, I said, "Here. Have a bourbon biscuit, that'll cheer you up."

She took one, then another and then another. The Bourbons finished, I brought out the chocolate hobnobs and asked her to tell me more.

She ate and dunked, and dunked and talked, about how much things had changed from when she was a girl. She described how, in 1987, some of her children took part in a special edition of the game show, It's a Knockout - a sort of crazy, school sports day for adults.

"We were so humiliated," she said.

And then the floodgates opened. She spoke about the partners that her children had chosen to marry. One disaster after another. 1992.

"Annus Horribilis", as she called it: separations, divorces, and scandals. Her home in Windsor Castle caught fire. All the stupid, important people she had to pretend to be nice to. Then the pandemic. It was endless.

"And this year is another annus horribilis," she said quietly. Her husband had died a couple of months ago. Now she just wanted an ordinary life, whatever that is. That was why she was here.

I poured out another cup of tea and said,

"Well I'm glad you came to me for your few days. That couldn't have been easy. Let's see how we can make your time here in Leeds a proper break." I promised I would keep her visit a secret and show her what an 'ordinary' life could be. I gave her a loan of some cash to tide her over until she got home. I told her the sorts of things I do in a week and invited her to come along with me if she wanted. She looked up from her teacup and her eyes twinkled.

"We would like that very much."

The next day we went on the No.52 bus into the town centre. When the bus was approaching, I told Betty to put her hand out. She looked puzzled but did it and the bus stopped. She looked at me as if to say, "Look what I can do, I can stop buses!" I stepped on to the bus and Betty followed. We went upstairs and sat in my favourite seat at the front, where we had the best view.

"This is wonderful." said Betty, a bit out of breath, looking out of the window and down into the street. She got a bit scared and ducked when we went under some trees. Her eyes were darting here, there, and everywhere. She waved at people waiting at the bus stop. At the beginning I was a bit embarrassed at all her royal hand waving, but she looked so happy that I decided to join in. When we were near our stop, I nudged her to stand up. The bus swung round the corner, Betty grabbed on to the handrail and she swung round too, giggling.





We got off on at the Corn Exchange and walked into the market. I tried to keep tabs on her. She loved the noise, the colours, the hustle and bustle, the variety of stalls. At one point, I was paying for some strawberries to have as our treat and when I looked around, she was nowhere to be seen. Eventually I found her in the flea market: in full flow, haggling with the stall holder over a tea-set that commemorated her own coronation.

"I'm sorry my man, but we will not pay more than £5".

"Lady, £25 is my last offer," he replied gruffly. "And that's robbing me."

Betty took out a fiver, pointed to the image of her face, and said in a very loud voice, "You do not realise to whom you are talking, my man."

"I don't care if you are the Queen of Sheba, this tea set is £25 and that's it."

Their voices were getting louder and louder and soon a small crowd grew round them.

"Let her have it, you old skinflint!" shouted someone. Others joined in:

"Have a heart!"

"Give an old woman what she wants!"

Betty was adamant and the crowd were on her side. Eventually the stallholder laughed and gave in to the cheer of the crowd. I went up to Betty, who had a huge smile on her face and gave her a high-five. She picked up her prize tea-set, showed it to the crowd and declared, "I was 96 last week, you know." Everybody clapped and shouted, "Happy birthday". With her head held high, nose in the air and a skip in her step, we went to catch the bus back to Meanwood.

That night, I decided to treat us to a fish and chip supper at the local community centre. Betty soon got chatting to the locals. She had particular heart-to-heart with Mary and Tracy, two regulars who were also recently widowed. I overheard them giggling about their husbands, describing in vivid detail what they were glad they wouldn't have to put up with any more. Mary described awful family parties when her husband was so rude about the family next door. Tracy described the times her man got drunk and made passes at the barmaid.

Betty nodded her head and smiled conspiratorially. She leant into Tracey and said, "Well, my husband asked Tom Jones, 'What do you gargle with? Pebbles?'"

Tracy and Mary just looked at each other. Then Betty told them about the time she and Philip were on holiday in Australia. Her husband asked an aboriginal businessman if they still threw spears at each other.

"I was mortified," confessed Betty.

But it was the things that happened behind closed doors that made them laugh the most. I caught the odd words: "toilet seat"; "slurping"; "crumbs"; "never listens". I leave the rest to your imagination.

On our way out, Tracy pulled me over and said, "She talks posh, but she was a good laugh. Bring her again when she visits." I just smiled to myself, and we went home.

The next morning was the last of Betty's stay. She looked so much happier than when she arrived. I made breakfast of pancakes, which we had with the strawberries I had bought in the market, a jug of fresh cream, and lots of cups of good old Yorkshire tea. Then the time had come. I put my coat on and went to the car. Betty was already standing there with her suitcase ready, clutching her prize tea-set. I made to open the boot, but before I could, Betty popped it open and placed in her things. She then scurried to the passenger door, opened it (herself!) and manoeuvred herself into the seat. I smiled, opened the driver's door, and got in.

We drove to the station, and I turned the radio on. I have it tuned to Classic FM. It was just starting with the next number: Jerusalem from the Last Night at the Proms. I started to sing along; it's one of my favourites. To my surprise, Betty joined in. As we came into the station car park, we were in full voice:

*I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.*

We looked at each other, smiled, took a big breath, and got out.

I went with her to the platform. The last I saw of her, she was sitting in 1st class. When the train started to pull out, she gave me one of those royal waves, grinning from ear to ear.

And that was that. Or so I thought. Betty Windsor had one last surprise for me.

Three months later, a parcel arrived, just in time for my birthday. Inside, there was a postcard, a packet of chocolate hobnobs, a cheque for the money I had lent her and a small royal-blue box. The postcard was a photo of our dear Queen. On the back she had written:

"We were very, very amused. Thanks for everything, and happy birthday"  
Betty W.

I opened the box and saw small, embossed card read: "For services to overwhelmed royalty". Under the card, sitting on cream silk, was a medal. It was purple, about the size of a hobnob, and it was engraved in gold with the following words:

"Ruth Steinberg, O.B.E., Ordinary But Extraordinary". ■





*We hear from older people across  
Leeds about their opinions of  
the Royals.*

*Find out what people really  
think about the monarchy over the page...*



**S**hould we keep the Queen? Or replace her with an elected head-of-state? Do we spend too much money on the Royal Family, or are they worth every penny they bring into the country through tourism? What about tradition and national pride? Should we be proud of our royal rituals or should we modernise our affairs?

Polling conducted in November 2021 revealed that nearly two thirds of people in the UK are in favour of the country remaining a monarchy. According to the stats, older people are even more likely to be in favour.

We wanted to see what older people in Leeds really thought. We asked lots of people from lots of different backgrounds for their thoughts on the monarchy and their perceptions of the Queen herself. The results are a mixed bag of opinions: we hope you find some that you agree with!

**“I LIKE THE QUEEN. SHE’S A WORKER. SHE’S DOWN-TO-EARTH. WHEN SHE MADE THAT PROMISE AT THE CORONATION, SHE KNEW WHAT IT MEANT. SHE KEPT TRUE TO THAT PROMISE.**

*Maureen*

I love the Queen. I think it’s an absolutely fabulous job she’s done for the country. She started so young and look at her now. She’s 90-odd and she’s still battling on. I think she’s brilliant. I want her to go on forever! It was a shame that Philip died – but I was never into him as much as her. It’s her I love. My mam and dad used to watch her on the telly, so I did too. Ever since, I’ve been a Royalist. Having the Royals shows you’re British. It’s one of the only things we’re good at.

*Peter*

I wouldn’t say I’m a Royalist, but the monarchy is a wonderful thing. When it comes to pomp and circumstance, we really are the country to do it. I think the Queen is an incredible woman. I met a lady who used to know the Queen and Princess in the war, when they were in the army. The Queen worked as a mechanic and used to service this lady’s car! It was phenomenal, the work they did during the war.

*Gita*

I like the Queen. She’s a worker. She’s down-to-earth. When she made that promise at the Coronation, she knew what it meant. She kept true to that promise. I was born in India, but never knew about the Queen there. My memories were of watching the Queen at Christmas on a black and white telly in this country. They used to show programmes on TV about the Royal Family on holiday – and my family loved that. It was just like looking at another family. I know they were Royal, but they were a family like us.

*Maureen*

It’s sad, all the things that have happened in the family. All the divorce. Diana. All that. But it’s never brought her down. They fly the flag for us. She’s a really good ambassador for our country.

*Tony*

I like the Queen, I like the Duke of Edinburgh. It isn’t printable what I think of some of the others!

*Shirley*

I’ve always been a Royalist. My mum was too, she brought us up to love the Royal Family. I’ve always loved the Queen.

*Maureen*

Can you imagine Britain having a president? Someone like Donald Trump? I mean, really. It’s just not us it. There’d be a rebellion if they got rid of it.

*Maggie*

She can’t chuck out the government if she doesn’t like them. I suspect she might want to sometimes. She’s not the Queen like Elizabeth I was. The parliament tell her what to say. She’s got no actual power to do much at all.

*Parveen*

My eldest daughter is obsessed with the Royals. She has lots of souvenirs and watches it all on the TV. I think she’s



alright but I'm not, like, "Wow!" I'm not bothered.

*Surinder*

I remember the Queen, ever since I came to England. She is very nice! She has been good, you can't say a bad word about her.

*Janet*

They don't do owt! I might live to that age if I didn't have any worries. That's what bugs me. I wouldn't do away with the Queen – and I wouldn't like her job. But, personally, I think they make too much of the whole thing. In the papers and on TV.

*Pat*

I think the Queen should have retired a long time ago. It would have given everyone else a chance – it might make things a bit less "stuck in the past". I do admire the Queen, but a lot is placed on her. She seems very old now and it might be good if she had a break.

*Joanna*

They've not had good press lately, but as an institution, I think the Royals are ok. I'd rather have them than an inane president. I have a great admiration for the Queen. She's been there for most of our lives – you like what you know. But she's been a particularly good monarch, compared to some of the other monarchs we've had. I think she's been incredibly stoical. She takes being Queen seriously.

*Margaret*

I used to be very enamoured. I saw the Coronation when I was a tiddler and I was impressed. Then I went off them, because I thought it was all a bit elitist. Now, I'm glad we've got a Royalty, because it means there's a counter-balance to whatever political party is in power. A figure-head like that – fairly neutral – is good for the country. The Royal Family are a mixed bag – but they're human. I do admire the Queen, particularly around how she conducted herself recently with Philip's funeral. I would never have thought of myself as a Royalist!

*Joy*

Most of the time, they do a grand job in a very difficult situation.

*Irene*

The Queen is magnificent. She provides a wonderful service to the country. Why alter it?

*Jean*

I think the Royal Family is important. I don't think the media tell the truth about them. It's all bad news, not good news. Prince Charles, Prince Philip have done a lot of amazing work for charities. We don't hear much about that. I got to know Philip a bit. He was lovely. He didn't act as if he was important.

*Barbara*

I'm very much a Royalist and have been for as long as I remember.

*Ernie*

I'm a republican. In this day and age, it seems silly that we spend so much money of them. I see why they're liked but I don't like the elitism.

*Marie*

I've always been a follower of the Royal Family. I'm in favour of the institution. I think the Queen is respected across the world. Despite all the problems they've had, I'm still a Royalist.

*Anne*

I think the Queen is absolutely marvellous. She said she'd devote her life to the service of this country – and she has. How she has coped with some of the things that have happened recently, I really don't know. When you see her, she's still our Queen – and I really admire. Nobody will ever be like her.

*Rosalind*

I think the Royal Family is far too big. The Queen does a marvellous job and displays a sense of responsibility as Head of State that some politicians should follow. I think all the family should be out earning their own living, instead of being cushioned by the state. Princess Anne seems to me to be very charitable and very giving. My experience of her is a good one. My experience of her is that she'll visit a nursing home and not be interested in the people that ran it, she'd want to speak to the the patients, on a level. If the others would follow her example, maybe I'd be more sympathetic to them!

*Hilary*

I think the Queen is a magnificent person. We wouldn't be Great Britain without her!

*Jean*

I'm not a Royalist, but I look around the world and don't see many Republican countries that I admire. The privilege and wealth don't sit easily with me. It's an institution that needs modernising too.

*Anne*

I have the highest praise for the Queen. I'm so sorry that some of her family have let her down. Personally, I'd prefer it if William and Kate took over, instead of Charles and Camilla. I met Camilla at the Great Yorkshire Show. I was always a little wary of her but she was charming, down-to-earth and a lovely person. So perhaps, she's helped Charles.

*Helen*

They've been born in circumstances they didn't choose and most of them are doing a reasonable job. I'm not particularly a monarchist but I do think it makes Britain a special place. I do quite like the tradition and I think it does bring money to the country. The Queen is obviously very dutiful and has given her life to the institution. She's had a lot to put up with. She's kept it together!

*Thank you to all the older people across the city, who shared their thoughts and opinions with us.*



*How to stay fit in your 90s!*

*We meet 95-year-old Keep Fit instructor  
Joyce Blackburn to pick up some tips.*

*Photography: JONATHAN TURNER*

**Q**ueen Elizabeth II was born in 1927 and is still serving her country. She's had a recent stint of poor health (not least catching Covid) but appears to have bounced back. The Queen shows no sign she's thinking of retiring! Despite scaling down her duties, she has made several appearances at Platinum Jubilee events and appeared in good spirits. As we get older, it can be harder to keep well. How can we stay healthy into our 90s?

Like the Queen, Joyce Blackburn was born in 1927. Joyce started running Keep Fit classes 60 years ago – and is still doing it today! She ascribes her interest in fitness as one of the things that has kept her healthy. Joyce has a sharp wit and an infectious sense of fun. But she's not to be messed with; in her classes, Joyce knows what she wants and knows how to get it! These days, Joyce's classes are a bit less physically strenuous. But she's still instructing Keep Fit every Thursday morning for a group of older women in Whitkirk. She's committed to helping people and is one of life's "doers". We met Joyce at home in LS14, to find out the secret of her longevity and to ask her about her thoughts on staying active as we get older.

**I'VE ALWAYS  
BEEN ACTIVE  
I DON'T DRINK  
AND I DON'T  
SMOKE –  
THAT'S THE  
MAIN THING.**

**How long have you been doing Keep Fit?**

I've been very keen on Keep Fit since I was in my 30s. I started in 1959. I've thoroughly enjoyed it! I've had that many women through my hands, it's unbelievable. I was keen from the beginning. A friend of mine said, "Let's go to Keep Fit class together," and that's where it started. I used to go down to the class at Victoria School on York Road. I started doing a class myself. It was run through the Council. After that I did it myself, got the certificate. A friend of mine ran the Whitkirk class. She had to retire on health grounds and said to me, "Would you like to do this class Joyce?" I said, "It depends on the girls. If they want me to take the class over, I will." Everybody approved of me so I did it. There were about 40 people in Whitkirk Church, all doing Keep Fit.

**Where have you run classes?**

I've been down at the school at Halton, the school at Garforth, the Conservative Club at Beeston. I tried one in Gipton. One night was enough though! They weren't interested. They wanted to talk! I said, "I haven't come here to talk, I've come here to help you get fit." But no. They weren't the type. You can tell "Keep Fitters" – the ones who are interested and the ones who aren't.

**Who were your Keep Fitters?**

It was mostly people about my age, however old I was. And ladies, generally. I did have a man once, down at Whitkirk a long time ago. He didn't take to it. He felt out of place. And some of the ladies got embarrassed.

**Tell us about the class you run now.**

I've been there 20 years. We're all a similar age. And we've grown older together. At the moment there's a handful of us – around 10. I'm the oldest – nobody as old as me! They said to me, "Don't give it up Joyce! We don't know where else to go." And they're right, I couldn't tell them anywhere I'd recommend. I do feel quite proud of myself. To think that people still want you to keep doing it at my age. It makes you feel good. I know them all personally and they all know me. They know if I'm not too happy with what they're doing, I'll tell them! It's every Thursday. I'm not going to give up. It keeps them going.





The Fitness  
**Queen**



### What sort of exercises do you do?

Swinging, lunging. Leg work. Those sorts of exercises. Years ago I used to do exercise on my back. These days I couldn't get up! We do it to music, which I enjoy. It gets me going!

### What sort of an instructor are you?

I don't like gossip. I stopped it at the class once. I said, "If you've anything to say, don't stand at the back of the room and whisper. Because you'd be surprised what I can hear. Speak up if there's something I'm doing you don't like." Then they know where they stand! I have a sense of humour. I like a laugh. I think I'm relatively fair though. I'm firm too, if I'm not getting the results I want!

### Have you done most of your classes in Leeds?

We've been all over doing demonstrations and shows. We went to Bridlington, as part of an event run by Elieen Fowler. I liked her. She was smashing. Not like the Green Goddess! We used to do demos with clubs and ribbons. Swing the clubs – I daren't do it now, I might break a window!



### What's the secret to staying healthy as you get older?

I've always been active. Enjoyed exercise. And I used to go dancing! I went to the 101, the Astoria, the Majestic. I remember walking all the way from Dewsbury Road up to the Astoria one New Year's Eve. I don't drink and I don't smoke – that's the main thing. You can't take a class if you drink. I've never been a drinker.

### You seem very dedicated to helping people stay fit.

I can't help it. I've got to help people. I go to a Luncheon Club – I'm a hostess. I'm the oldest person there, serving everyone else. I like people. I like meeting people – and I like people to be happy. It's just how I feel.



### The Fitness Queen

*Left* - Joyce at home in 2022, aged 95.

*Right* - Joyce (on the left) in the 1970s.

*Next Page* - Some of the exercises Joyce teaches are chair-based.





**“WHAT WILL BE  
WILL BE. I M STILL  
THE SAME JOYCE I  
WAS WHEN I WAS A  
TEENAGER. I  
DON'T FEEL ANY  
DIFFERENT.”**

### **Tell us about your early life.**

I was at Barnardo's until I was 14. Life wasn't very sweet. There were good points and bad points. But if you haven't got parents, it makes a big difference. It perhaps makes you stronger. Makes you work harder and stand up for yourself. It wasn't a life of luxury. I started work aged 14. I worked in a very posh ladies lingerie shop. The Lady Mayoress came to do her shopping there. Sugden's of Commercial Street. When I got older, I got married, but he went astray so I said, "Keep going!" I have a daughter and a granddaughter too. I've done lots of jobs. Worked in a bakehouse, worked in a shoe warehouse, done all sorts of things. I've kept myself occupied.

### **How do you feel about getting older?**

I don't think about it. What will be, will be. I'm still the same Joyce as I was when I was a teenager. I don't feel any different. A lot of people don't believe I'm the age I am. I remember when I was young, a chap said to me, "You look older than you are. But when you're older, you'll look younger." I like doing things back-to-front.

### **You were born in the same year as the Queen. What do you think of her?**

I like the Royal Family. And like the Queen. She's lovely. I saw she was out the other day. She had a walking stick with her. I've had a walking stick for a while. It's a safety

measure. I have a friend – she won't have one. I say to her, "If you fall over, I have no sympathy!" A walking stick is nothing to be ashamed of. People go all over, go walking in the hills with sticks. Why not use one to get around where you live? It's silly not to have one.

### **Do you think some older people are nervous about doing exercise?**

Some of them. Others might be embarrassed. But they shouldn't be. We all females together, nobody's watching us.

### **What would you say to someone who'd never been to a Keep Fit class before?**

I'd ask if they'd done it before. I'd give them a bit more attention. I'd help them. That's what you've got to do: help people. Years ago we used to have leotards and tights, but these days you wear whatever you want. I say to the girls, "Just wear whatever you like – but don't come in tight trousers – they might split when you bend over!" ■

*Keep Fit for the Over 55s runs every Thursday at:  
St Mary's Church Whitkirk Community Centre, 390  
Selby Road, Whitkirk, Leeds, LS15 0AA.*

*Call for more information, or feel welcome to just turn up. Contact: Joyce Blackburn on 0113 264 5740.*



# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

*Kathryn Brook from Active Leeds for Health explains how doing basic exercise can help you get around. Even in your 90s!*

## 1 DIFFICULTY GETTING AROUND?

Some older people start to find themselves needing help getting around. They find it challenging rising from a chair. Often people lose “functional fitness”, which is the ability to do everyday things. You might notice you aren’t as strong or mobile as you were. It might be getting harder to get about inside your home, to complete tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and gardening. You might get very tired when out-and-about. Lots of people are scared of falling over and spend all their time terrified of things that might trip them up.



## WHY EXERCISE WORKS

# 2

When exercise is taken regularly, the health benefits greatly outweigh the risks. If you move more, there is a lower risk of falling. Physical activity is beneficial for everyday living, particularly if you concentrate on strength and balance.

It contributes towards greater independence, leg strength, arm strength and cardiovascular fitness. In summary, doing more exercise, helps you keep mobile. And it works whatever age you are. It's never too late!

Doing some physical activity can prevent you becoming frail as you get older. It helps people age successfully and actively. We recommend you move more and sit less to keep your fitness. Even just standing up every hour helps. It's amazing how simple things can help your health - 'pottering about' is associated with a range of health benefits, including lower risk of obesity and cardiovascular disease.





# 3

## STRENGTH AND BALANCE

Losing your balance can be scary. Some people have sticks or other walking aids. But it's never too late to do something about it. Findings from a 12-week Strength Training programme (for people over 90 living in a care home) revealed that the participants doubled their leg strength! And a group of over 75-year-olds rejuvenated 20 years of lost strength in 12 weeks of seated strength exercise.

All the people in these studies started with low intensity exercise. They got their form and technique right first, then built on their gains and concentrated on strength and balance. It's key to manage your strength and make sure you enjoy the exercise too!



## ACTIVE LEADS FOR HEALTH

# 4

Active Leeds for Health offer a service which is proven to build strength and improve balance and mobility. The "Postural Stability – Strength and Balance" programme is based on a course that stops people having falls. The class is well-structured and based on evidence that shows it works! We have trained instructors, who make sure all the exercise are appropriate to whatever age group they work with.

The programme is adapted to suit a person's needs. It may start with chair-based exercises, to help build your strength and confidence. Participants can either self-refer or can be referred by a health professional. All we need is a referral form, then we can assess your suitability, before we can guarantee a place on the programme. The course is free for all participants.

## USEFUL CONTACTS



You can contact Active Leeds for Health in the following ways to find out more:

Email: [health.programmes@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:health.programmes@leeds.gov.uk)

Phone: 0113 3783680

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