

Many of the veterans commenting on Haig's website's book of condolence speak of a personal loyalty to the Queen and the honour and privilege of serving her. Taking the oath of allegiance affirming to be "faithful and bear true allegiance" to Queen Elizabeth or receiving a commission bearing her signature to her "trustworthy and beloved", created a strong and personal relationship with HM that those outside the service community find hard to appreciate. Young men and women willing to fight and, if necessary, die for her did so in that knowledge that hers was a life of service dedicated to the nation and her servicemen and women in particular. As the scores of veterans queuing to pay their respects in Westminster Hall attests, that relationship never changed.

The last week has seen an outpouring of love and affection for her Majesty across all four nations of her United Kingdom. But I've been particularly struck by high regard in which she was held across the world, and particularly the warmth and affection expressed in countries whose history with Britain and its monarchy has been less than happy. Her Majesty was never afraid to reach out across divides and encourage healing. She was the first monarch to visit both India and the Republic of Ireland post their independence and her famous but controversial handshake with Martin McGuinness became the embodiment of two communities seeking to forge a lasting peace. As Emanuel Macron said of her "to you she was your Queen. To us she was just The Queen. She will be with us forever"

Her Majesty took on the patronage of Haig Housing from her father, King George and took a keen interest in its work (including a regular stipend from the Privy purse). We're so honoured that she opened this new development just under 3 years ago on a day that none of us will forget. As the Queen arrived, and as if by magic, the rain abated but it is the warmth and radiance of HM that most sticks in my mind, as well as her keen interest in all the people she met, particularly as, at 93, she was of an age when most would be happy to put their feet up. The lovely photograph taken of her only a few days before her

passing shows that, even when frailty finally took its toll, she lost none of that. Nor did she lose that fierce dedication to duty and service which she promised the nation at the beginning of her reign.

Far too often we leave unsaid those things which, when someone passes, we wish we had said. We should be grateful that this year's Jubilee celebrations allowed us as a nation (and Paddington Bear) to express our love and affection for the Queen and thank her for steadfast service and I hope that this, and her deep faith, sustained her in her final days.

Throughout our lives, HM has been one constant; an anchor for all of us in a fast-changing and often challenging world. Our sense of grief at her loss is all the more acute given the myriad of problems that the country, indeed the world, faces. However, her 70 years on the throne has left a strong legacy on which HM the King will build, and, as she said herself "Grief is the price we pay for love".