

Speech: Ambassador to Mongolia Catherine Arnold at the Queen's Birthday Party 2017

Catherine Arnold addresses attendees at the Queen's Birthday Party 2017

Vice Ministers, Members of Parliament, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, it's my great pleasure to welcome you here, as we come together to mark the official birthday of Her Majesty the Queen.

No monarch has reigned longer.

At her coronation in 1953 the Queen promised the peoples she served across the globe:

"Throughout all my life, and with all my heart, I shall strive to be worthy of your trust."

It's one thing for a 26 year to utter those words. It is another to live by them for the next 65 years; today Her Majesty is Queen of 16 UN member states and head of the Commonwealth of 52 nations.

So I would like you to raise your glasses for the first toast of the afternoon, to Her Majesty: [The Queen]

Birthdays are a moment to celebrate. And there is much to celebrate in the last year of relations between Mongolia and the UK. Polo, countering the illegal wildlife trade, enhancing export standards, strengthening mental health care, championing women's rights, the UK and Mongolia are working together here, in the UK, and globally on things that matter to us, that matter to Mongolia, and that matter to the world we all live in.

That wouldn't be possible without the dedicated embassy team and without all of you, our friends, colleagues and partners. Each of you is here because of what the UK and Mongolia are doing together. And the number and diversity of you says more than words. Thank you.

But birthdays are also a moment to reflect. Reflect on what has changed. What has stayed the same. What has happened. The Queen's Birthday is no exception.

As the oldest and longest reigning monarch in the world, Her Majesty's Birthday allows us a particularly long period of reflexion. 91 years to be precise.

But does any of us truly understand what 91 years means? To bring it to life I'm going to quote a short extract from two things that were written in 1926, the year Her Majesty was born.

The first is from a car manual:

The engine is started by the lifting of the crank at the front of the car. Take hold of the handle and push firmly toward the car till you feel the crank engage, then lift upward with a quick swing. With a little experience this operation will become an easy matter.

Fortunately, none of you arrived today having had to use a starting-crank. The beautiful Range Rovers at the entrance demonstrate far better than my speech just how much technology has changed over Her Majesty's life – and I would like to thank Jaguar Land Rover for their sponsorship of today's celebration.

The second extract comes from the British children's classic Winnie the Pooh, also written in 1926:

"Well," said Pooh, "what I like best," and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called."

All of us will recognise immediately that moment that so confused Pooh. As the kaleidoscope of technology changes around us, human nature remains stubbornly constant.

That said, I know you won't have Pooh's feeling when you visit our sponsor Portmeirion in the Shangri-La mall – as I hope you all will. I thank Portmeirion today, and every time I have tea in my favourite cup. I am never disappointed.

Change and continuity. Which brings me to the last of my three birthday reflexions: what has happened.

A lot in the last year. Since I last stood here both of our countries have had parliamentary elections. And the UK has voted to leave the European Union – a perfect example of continuity and change.

The UK is exiting the EU. But we are not leaving Europe – that would be impossible, our culture, our values and our geography are inextricably entwined with our friends on the Continent.

The UK's outward looking engagement with the world will also remain unchanged.

Our sponsor Holiday Inn, part of UK InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, is a perfect example of that. IHG's origins lie in the founding of the Bass Brewery in 1777. Last year I was delighted to open Holiday Inn in Mongolia 9000km and 239 years later – a place that will further invigorate Mongolian business and tourism.

The UK's global engagement is clear. We remain the only G7 country to have met our UN commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas development. We have the largest defence spend in Europe. And our universities will continue to foster some of the world's greatest minds; the only countries to have more Nobel Prize winners than my university, Cambridge, alone has nurtured, are

the US, UK and Germany, in that order. Of all the world's heads of state and government, one in every seven was educated in Britain.

But as the Queen celebrates another birthday, we should pause for one final reflexion. Her Majesty is the only living head of state to have served in World War II. Shortly after her 18th birthday the then Princess Elizabeth trained as a war-time mechanic and truck driver.

3 weeks ago, over 70 years later, Her Majesty toured the wards of Manchester's Children's Hospital. She was there to talk with children who had been blown up leaving a concert.

Terrorism stalks the world. And today we remember those affected in recent weeks.

But I also want us to reflect on our personal response.

After the horrific attack, many thousands of people gathered in the central square in Manchester to commemorate the 22 who died and the dozens of injured. After the silence, the crowd struck up a song by Manchester band Oasis: don't look back in anger.

We stand here today, the UK and Mongolia, as proud democratic nations. Let me conclude with something else the Queen said on her coronation day.

"Parliamentary institutions, with their free speech and respect for the rights of minorities, and the inspiration of a broad tolerance in thought and expression – all this we conceive to be a precious part of our way of life and outlook.

I ask you now to cherish them – and practice them too; then we can go forward together in peace, seeking justice and freedom for all men."

Politics, events, what happens are shaped by people. We each have a personal part to play. We can choose to engage, to counter the narratives of hate, whatever mask they wear, whether of religion, ideology or nationalism.

Or we can choose to stand by and watch.

Each of us is here today because we have influence and, in different ways, power over narratives or people. As we make our choice each day, let us think of that 26 year old Queen:

"Throughout all my life, and with all my heart, I shall strive to be worthy of your trust."

May we strive to be worthy of the trust of those over whom we have influence.

Thank you.