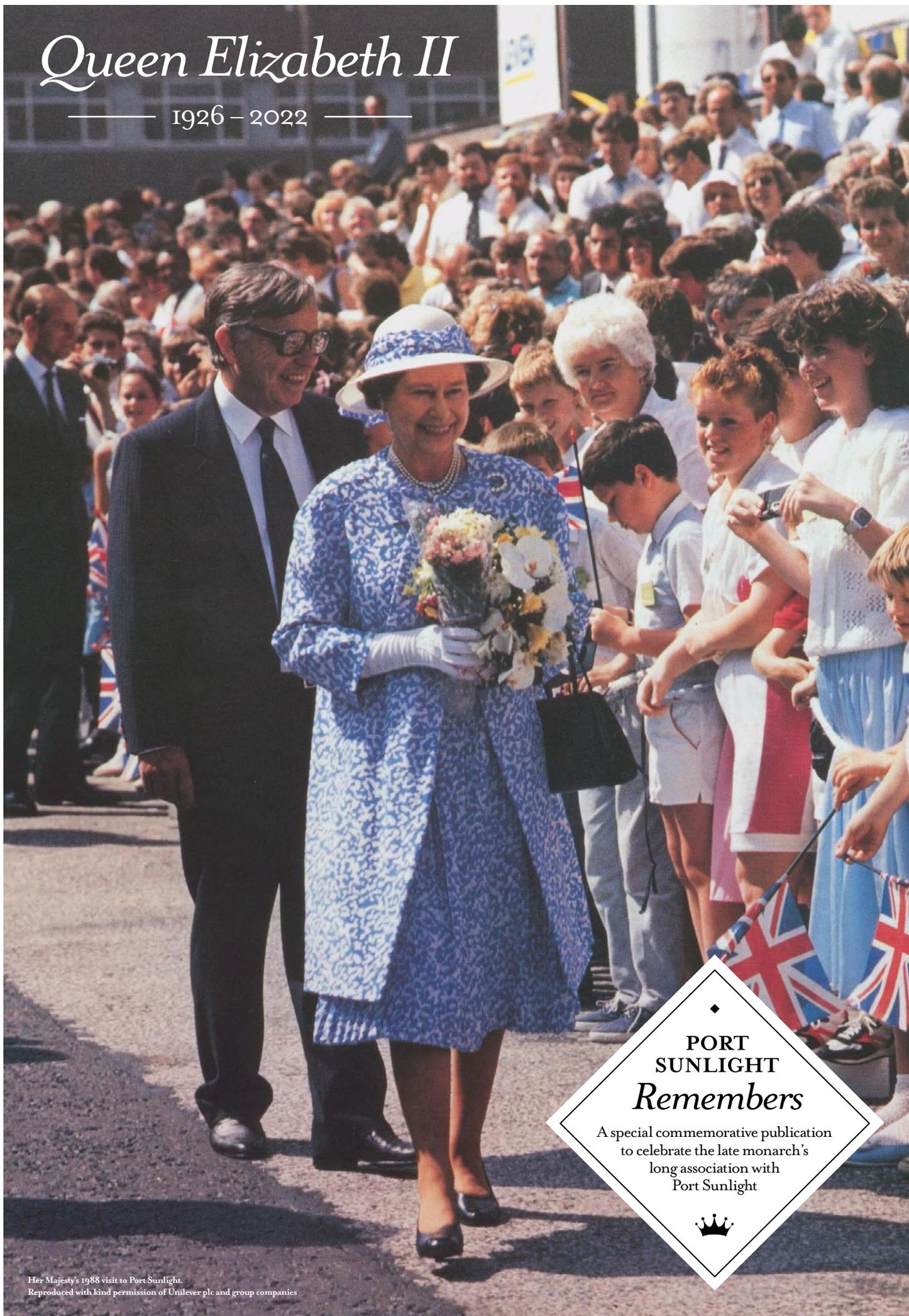


Queen Elizabeth II

1926 – 2022



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**PORT
SUNLIGHT**
Remembers

A special commemorative publication
to celebrate the late monarch's
long association with
Port Sunlight



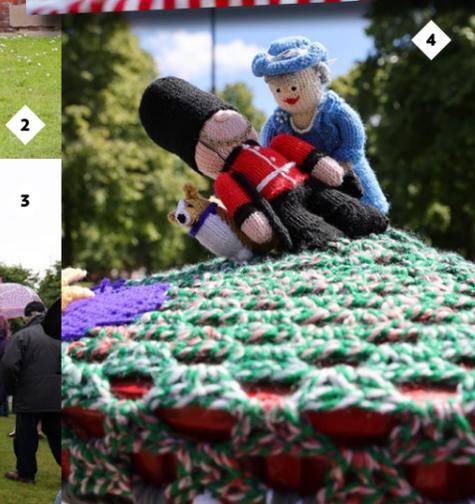
Introduction

Welcome to this special publication celebrating the late Queen Elizabeth II's links with Port Sunlight. The 26-year-old Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor ascended to the throne in 1952 and for almost three quarters of a century was a reassuring constant in the lives of many of the residents of Port Sunlight and those working here.

Her Majesty visited Port Sunlight in 1957 and 1988, and was welcomed enthusiastically on both occasions. As a village, we also commemorated the major landmark dates in her reign such as the Royal Coronation in 1953, the Silver Jubilee in 1977, and of course, the Platinum Jubilee in June 2022 when we celebrated her remarkable 70 years on the throne, becoming the first British monarch to reach that milestone.

This commemorative supplement looks back at the late Queen's association with Port Sunlight over the years. In the main, it recalls the bunting, cheering, rain, sunshine, flowers and general merriment that have accompanied the great celebrations, none of which would have been possible without the enthusiasm, organisation and energy of our residents.

1. Picnic on the Green invitation
 2. Example of one of the dressed houses
 3. Jubilee weekend celebrations
 4. Crochet displays made by the Sunlight Stitches
 5. Winner of best-dressed house
- Images 2-5 © Dan Bentley



The Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Like communities and people throughout the UK, Port Sunlight organised special events over the long bank holiday in June 2022 to mark the late Queen's 70 years of service as the nation's Head of State.

The Platinum Jubilee gave people everywhere an opportunity to enjoy a sense of togetherness again after the pandemic, a chance to reflect on the enormous changes witnessed during the Queen's long reign, and time to look to the future. In the lead-up to the Platinum Jubilee weekend the village was festooned with colourful flags and bunting and creative residents decorated their homes with royal themed displays.

On Wednesday 1st June - just before the big weekend - Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) planted a Queen Elizabeth Acer tree on Museum Green in the heart of the village. The tree planting ceremony was carried out by Caroline Everett (second from right) who as a young girl, together with her sister, presented a posy of flowers to the Queen during the Royal Visit to Port Sunlight in 1988 (more on that on page 10). We were delighted that their mother, Mrs Jean Taylor, and two of her grandchildren were also able to attend.

On Thursday, there was bunting galore around the village as residents competed for the best-dressed house. Competition was stiff, but out of over 40 houses that took part, first prize went to Brenda Cantillano on The Ginnel. Barry Yeardsley on Greendale Road and Harry and Sonia Koffman on Lower Road were awarded runners-up prizes.

On the Sunday of the Jubilee weekend, PSVT celebrated with a picnic on Museum Green. With the assistance of a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, residents along with village groups, societies and businesses got together to co-produce the event. Sadly, the weather gods sent rain Port Sunlight's way, however, there was a certain synchronicity to this as there had also been rain on the Queen's Coronation back in June 1953.

Despite the inclement weather, the Picnic on the Green brought plenty of people to the village. A live stage featuring popular local groups such as The Port Sunlight Sea Dogs, The Get Back Beats and The Swing Era Jazz Band provided musical entertainment, all compered by Graeme White, the Radio City Presenter and Premier League Stadium Announcer for Everton. Food and drink purveyors were on hand to supply an appetising range of picnic essentials, while vintage fair rides and stalls entertained visitors of all ages.

Just outside the Lady Lever Art Gallery was another interesting attraction; National Museums Liverpool's 'House of Memories on the Road' touring mobile museum, showing a commemorative film about the Queen, the Coronation and Royal Jubilees gone by.

The Lady Lever itself celebrated the Platinum Jubilee with a unique month-long exhibition of portraits of Her Majesty. The six schools in the Wirral-based Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust challenged their students to create pictures of the monarch, some of which were exhibited in the Gallery's activity rooms. The portraits created by Church Drive Primary School were showcased on the railings of the Lady Lever for both residents and visitors to enjoy. (Check out the pupils' artworks, including a piece from

Port Sunlight's Church Drive Primary School, on pages 5 & 9) The school also planted a tree outside their grounds as part of The Queen's Green Canopy Initiative.

Earlier in the day there was a Pentecost and Jubilee Communion at Christ Church. On the previous Friday, visitors had been able to enjoy delicious cream teas in the beautiful surroundings of the church, to the accompaniment of music from the famous Willis Organ.

Our historic village has, of course, seen many royal celebrations over its nearly 135-year history, but perhaps because of the sad event which followed only four months later few will be remembered as poignantly as the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.



Planting the Queen Elizabeth Acer on Museum Green. From left: Collections Officer, James Hayes; Honorary President of PSVT, Maggie Sparks; Landscape Manager, Liam English; Caroline Everett; and Landscape Gardener, Andy Durney.



Long live the Queen!

IN OUR FIRST TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, JAMES HAYES, PSVT'S COLLECTIONS OFFICER, RECALLS THE VILLAGE CELEBRATIONS THAT ACCOMPANIED HER MAJESTY'S CORONATION IN 1953.

Like the rest of the nation, Port Sunlight was gripped by a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation nearly 70 years ago as the enthronement of the 27-year-old Queen Elizabeth II approached. Although Elizabeth had become queen 16 months earlier when her father, King George VI, had died at 57 years of age, tradition regarding when celebrations should be held after a monarch's death meant her coronation was delayed until 2nd June 1953. The Coronation was planned as a great public spectacle full of colour and pageantry for a country which had seen little of either for well over a decade. The ceremony was to be televised, and so for the first time ever the ordinary people of Britain were going to be able to watch a monarch's coronation in Westminster Abbey.

Heralding a brighter future

In 1953, Britain was living in the shadow of the Second World War. Bombsites scarred many cities including Liverpool, where more than 10,000 houses had been destroyed. In Port Sunlight, almost every building had suffered a degree of damage as a result of enemy action and some had been completely destroyed. However, there was a feeling that the coronation

might herald a brighter future. War-damaged houses in the village were being repaired and a landscape renovation project was in progress following the neglect of the war years. The suspension of sweet rationing in February 1953 meant children could look forward to treats during the street parties planned for Coronation Day.

Like the rest of the country, Port Sunlight took on a festive air as the historic day approached. The Lever Brothers' office buildings on Wood Street were hung with colourful banners, bunting and shields, and village houses were festooned with pennants and flags.

Coronation Day arrives

On the day itself a green close to Church Drive School became the venue for the school's Coronation Festival. Sports and other entertainments were held which, in keeping with the patriotic mood of the day, included the singing of old English airs. A highlight of the festival was the presentation by pupils of tableaux representing scenes from British history, such as the signing of the Magna Carta. The children dressed in period costume, though sourcing the materials must have been a challenge when so

many things were still in short supply.

Older members of the Port Sunlight community also dressed-up. Members of the Port Sunlight Players - the village's amateur dramatic group - joined other Birkenhead District Amateur Theatre Federation societies in *Coronation Fanfare*, a festive review staged at the Gaumont Theatre, Birkenhead.

The Lever Library on Greendale Road (which later became Port Sunlight's first Heritage Centre) hosted a Coronation Exhibition organised by library staff and local school children. The centrepiece of the display was a revolving platform where various aspects of coronation history and pageantry were depicted.

Port Sunlight News, the village magazine produced by Lever Brothers, treated its readers to a full-colour cover. Inside was a striking black and white photograph of a smiling, youthful Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, taken in the Green Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace a few months before. There was also a piece about local Lever Brothers' employees who were involved in ceremonial events in London.



Artwork by Lucy of Church Road Primary School, part of the 2022 Platinum Jubilee Children's Art Exhibition



The First Royal Visit

PORT SUNLIGHT, AND LEVER BROTHERS IN PARTICULAR, HAS A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE ROYAL FAMILY.

As early as 1892, Lever Brothers was granted a Royal Warrant for Sunlight Soap and appointed official soap makers to Queen Victoria, the great, great grandmother of Queen Elizabeth II. In March 1914, King George V and Queen Mary (our late Queen's grandparents) visited Port Sunlight, and before he became King George VI, the Queen's father came to open the Duke of York Cottages in May 1934.

Her Majesty herself visited Port Sunlight for the first time on 11th July 1957. It was a part of a very busy trip to the North West which also took in Chester, Wallasey, Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port. Accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Queen visited Lever Brothers' main offices at Lever House and toured the factory before visiting the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

A whistle-stop tour of soap making

Unfortunately, the village did not quite live up to its pleasant name, and it was a day for macs and umbrellas. However, the incessant rain failed to dampen the spirits of the gathered crowds.

The Royal visitors first embarked on a tour of Lever House. In the oak-panelled Board Room they met the Board of Directors, before viewing a display of Port Sunlight products destined for both home and overseas markets. A scale model of the works and village was studied, and the jobs of the 6-7,000 employees were described by the Chairman.

The Royal couple watched products being labelled, wrapped and packed before being greeted in the yard outside by 5,000 rain-soaked but cheering employees. At one point the Duke stopped to chat with an employee and after hearing that he worked in the Research Department quipped, "Interesting, I suppose you are the chap who tries to put more bubbles into the stuff."

On her departure from the factory, the Queen was presented with a casket of Port Sunlight products and a special copy of *The Story of Port Sunlight* bound in royal purple leather.

Following in the footsteps of her grandfather

The next stop on the Royal tour was the Lady Lever Art Gallery. Though her grandfather, King George V, had laid the foundation stone in March 1914, this was the first time a reigning monarch had visited the building. The late Queen had one of the largest and most important art collections in the world and was particularly interested in the period furniture and Pre-Raphaelite works on display. Tea was served in the tapestry-hung Masonic Room where a magnificent iced cake - a scale model of the gallery - took pride of place before being distributed among Bebington's senior citizens at a later date.

The Queen and Duke's departure from the village took them through its carefully tended landscape, where the summer floral displays had been brought forward so as to be in bloom for the visit.



OPPOSITE PAGE
The crowds greet Her Majesty outside Lever Brothers



👑
JULY
1957



TOP
The Royal couple is presented with a casket of Port Sunlight products

BELOW
The Queen learns how Sunlight Soap is made

RIGHT
The Royal party tours Lady Lever Art Gallery

OPPOSITE PAGE
More memories from Her Majesty's visit to Port Sunlight in 1937

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The Silver Jubilee and a rather unique competition

IN 1977, PORT SUNLIGHT JOINED THE REST OF THE NATION IN CELEBRATING THE QUEEN'S SILVER JUBILEE.

The Queen had decided that she would mark her 25 years on the throne with a series of tours that summer, meeting as many of her people as possible. Though previous monarchs, such as the Tudors, had used annual summer progresses through their kingdom as a way to stay in the hearts and minds of their subjects, no British monarch visited so much of the country in so short a space of time as the Queen that year.

A very special prize

On 21st June, the Queen visited Liverpool as part of her tour of the North West, and one lucky group of Port Sunlight workers and their

spouses got a very special opportunity to witness the highpoint of the visit. The factory at Port Sunlight organised a unique competition for employees and pensioners, and the eight lucky winners got to experience the Royal Review of River Mersey Shipping from on board a participating vessel.

Meanwhile, visitors to Port Sunlight during the Jubilee period were treated to a Union Jack-themed floral welcome. Estate gardeners cut out and planted patriotic red, white and blue flowers in verges, beds and window troughs throughout the village and factory.

Children's Art Exhibition entries

The children of the six schools in Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust challenged their students to create pictures of the Queen to mark her Platinum Jubilee – see opposite and also page 4 for some of our favourites.



Top: Happy Company Trade Union and Joint Consultation representatives on *Sand Swallow II* before setting sail from Bromborough Dock
 Bottom: Competition winners and the Lever Brothers Chair on the *Helpful Hand* at Bromborough Dock

OPPOSITE PAGE
 1: 2022 Children's Art Exhibition entry from Isiah of Poulton Lancelyn Primary School
 2: By Florence Luukas of Stanton Road Primary School
 3: By Faith of Poulton Lancelyn Primary School
 4: By Jack Harry, Year 1, of Great Meols Primary School



1



2



3



4

August 1988 – A child's eye view

Caroline Everett (nee Taylor) was just 9 years old and her sister, Helen, was 5 when the Queen last visited Port Sunlight. Caroline recalls a big day in her family's life...

"Our Dad, John Taylor, was General Works Manager of the Port Sunlight factory. This was the era where we could pop into Lever House and see him after school if we were passing. I can still recall the soft soapy smell that filled the corridors and his work suits.

I have memories of a build-up of excitement about the centenary of the factory. As a 9-year-old I found it really hard to comprehend that where my Dad worked was 100 years old. At that age 100 years ago seemed like the Stone Age, and I thought my parents wrote with charcoal in school!

We now know that a Royal Visit requires vast logistical planning and preparation, and there had clearly been months of activity before my sister and I were even aware of the centenary. The visit created a huge buzz about the family - our Dad was going to spend the day with Our Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh! This was such a lifetime highlight. Even as young children we understood this was the most exciting of events.

I can remember our parents' pride and excitement when they told us we had been invited to present the Queen with her bouquet on the day! A trip to Laura Ashley to buy dresses followed. So many people were excited for the Royal Visit, and I can recall anticipation building as the day approached. The night before, Helen and I were sent to bed with bendy rollers in to create matching curls!

On the day Mum and Dad needed to be at Port Sunlight much earlier to join the Royal Party, so Helen and I were looked after by a lovely lady called Megan. So many flag-waving people lined the route that the Royal Party would take through Port Sunlight - we'd never seen so many people in one place. Helen and I were taken into the factory (which in itself was hugely exciting) and escorted to our spot with the bouquet to await the Queen. Our moment with the Queen was actually fleeting but something so incredibly special and something Helen and I have cherished.

Dad served 38 years at Unilever. He was passionate about his role and repeatedly reminisced about his career. The Royal Visit was a huge highlight, and to be able to spend time with the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh was very special. He enjoyed reliving the event, the logistics, and working with colleagues and outside agencies. Our parents were lucky enough to attend lunch with the Royal Party that day, and Dad would always mention spotting the Queen applying her lipstick behind her handbag at the end of the meal!

Dad was later invited to a Royal Garden party at Buckingham Palace and on his retirement was awarded an OBE for services to the chemical industry and business in the north west. We were all lucky enough to attend Buckingham Palace with him which was the greatest honour - we couldn't have been prouder."

TOP
The Queen admires a car made from packets of Pears and Lifebuoy soap

MIDDLE
Her Majesty unveils a commemorative plaque to mark the opening of the new soap factory

BOTTOM
The Queen tours the new soap works

OPPOSITE PAGE
Her Majesty greets the crowds outside the Lever Brothers factory

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The Second Royal Visit

IN 1988 PORT SUNLIGHT CELEBRATED THE CENTENARY OF ITS FOUNDATION. THE STANDOUT EVENT IN THE YEAR-LONG PROGRAMME OF CELEBRATIONS WAS A VISIT BY HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH,

The Queen arrived at Port Sunlight by car from the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, which had docked at Liverpool Landing Stage on the River Mersey, accompanied by its escort, the destroyer HMS *Battleaxe*. Prince Philip arrived separately by helicopter which he was said to have piloted himself and landed within the factory complex.

Historical continuity

Her Majesty's route through Port Sunlight was lined by hundreds of people waving flags and cheering enthusiastically. Stopping opposite the Gladstone Theatre she planted a tree outside 100 Greendale Road to commemorate the centenary, and in a nice touch of historical continuity used the silver spade used by Lady Leverhulme to cut the first sod 100 years before.

Next on the Royal itinerary was Lever House, where the Queen and Prince Philip were met by the Lever Brothers Chair. This was followed by a short tour of the site which included the new soap making factory and the soap finishing factory. While there, the Queen received a posy of flowers from Helen and Caroline Taylor, the young daughters of the General Works Manager, John Taylor (see opposite). She also saw imaginative artworks made from soap and packaging materials by art and design students from Wirral Metropolitan College. The pièce de résistance, however, was a soap model of *Britannia* made by one of the company's fitters.

The climax of the Royal visit took place on Main Road where Her Majesty spoke to the assembled

crowds to rousing cheers, and unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the opening of the new £12m soap factory. The new plant was the most advanced in the world at the time and had the capacity to produce 70,000 tonnes of soap a year in 20 different brands. After a short walkabout - when the Royal couple spoke to some rather lost-for-words children - they departed for *Britannia*.



JUNE
2012

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

PORT SUNLIGHT HAS SEVERAL PHYSICAL REMINDERS OF PAST ROYAL EVENTS, AND AS PART OF THE VILLAGE'S CELEBRATIONS FOR THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE AN ANALEMMATIC SUNDIAL WAS UNVEILED IN THE DIAMOND.

The inspiration for this practical piece of public art came from the Friends of Port Sunlight Village. As well as assisting other local groups, venues and events through fundraising, the Friends wanted a project of their own and decided upon the interactive sundial. Financial assistance was provided by the Biffa Award, a multi-million-pound environment fund.

The sundial's official naming ceremony took place on 27th April 2012 when members of PSVT and pupils from Church Drive Primary School unveiled the new feature.

The long Diamond Jubilee weekend in early June saw a range of foodie celebratory treats for the village, including afternoon tea for the whole family on the Diamond and a picnic catered by several award-winning local food producers. While enjoying their tasty picnic fare, visitors could listen to a suitably regal programme from the Port Sunlight Lyceum Brass Band, and in keeping with the patriotic flavour of the day, Bebington's Whitehead School of Drama and Dance performed around a temporarily erected maypole.



SEPTEMBER
2022

The Death of Queen Elizabeth II

ON 8TH SEPTEMBER 2022, THE WORLD RECEIVED THE SAD NEWS THAT QUEEN ELIZABETH II HAD PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY AT HER BELOVED SCOTTISH HIGHLAND RESIDENCE, BALMORAL CASTLE.

In the 10-day period of national mourning which followed, Port Sunlight joined the rest of the country in paying its respect to the deceased monarch. Flags in the village were flown at half-mast and members of the public left flowers, cards and tributes at the base of the flagpole on the Diamond. A Book of Condolence was opened at Christ Church. On its website, PSVT posted a special pictorial tribute which looked back at

the Queen's two visits to the village. On the eve of the funeral, the Lyceum Brass Band held a special commemorative concert on the Diamond. The day of the Royal Funeral itself, Monday 19th September, was a public holiday.

In earlier times, the funerals of monarchs seemed distant and remote, however, the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II unfolded with an unparalleled sense of immediacy thanks

to television coverage. In her last Christmas message, the Queen said that her Platinum Jubilee Year should be an "opportunity for people everywhere to enjoy a sense of togetherness" and though the circumstances were undeniably sad, perhaps it was fitting that the last act in her long life was to bring together the people of the United Kingdom.

Thank you

We would like to thank National Lottery Community Fund for funding our Platinum Jubilee event. Very special thanks also go to our local community residents, businesses and everyone who took part in our celebrations.

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