



How the Platinum Jubilee reminded us of the importance of collective memories by Helen Fountain, August 2023



In April 2022 we embarked on our Creative Windows for the Jubilee project, designed to support people in Oxfordshire to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. At that time, we had no idea that the Queen would pass away in September of that year, which made the unexpected ways in which the project unfolded even more poignant.

The original aim of the project was to use creativity as a vehicle to bring people together to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee and to develop an opportunity to share the experience with others, especially those who might feel isolated over the long Jubilee Bank Holiday. This aim was achieved: the Jubilee weekend and preceding days saw many people come together to create bunting, share stories, and make new friends over tea and cake. Following on from the Jubilee weekend, Age UK Oxfordshire held a series of Jubilee parties for older people at locations across the county. It was clear from the outset that many people had amazing memories of previous Royal occasions and we wanted to take the opportunity to collect Oral Histories from as many people as possible.

I have spent many years delivering reminiscence projects and making oral history recordings, but it still never fails to surprise me how many people have extraordinary stories to share, stories which are often viewed as perfectly ordinary by the storyteller but leave the listener in awe! Encounters with Royalty (many of the people involved in the project had met members of the Royal Family) and witnessing landmark moments in history (watching the Coronation Procession from the Mall in 1953) were all casually recounted with wit and panache. It was a privilege to listen, and I was reminded that the memories of our elders offer us a unique perspective on historical events. These memories are not available to us indefinitely. Make the most of time spent with your elders and take some time to listen to them as much as you can, there is so much to learn!

- All the material (photos, audio recordings and films) has been shared with [Oxfordshire History Centre](#) for future generations to enjoy.
- The Age UK Oxfordshire Platinum Jubilee celebrations film can be viewed [here](#).
- The Age UK Oxfordshire Platinum Jubilee Memories film Part 1 can be viewed [here](#).
- The Age UK Oxfordshire Platinum Jubilee Memories film Part 2 can be viewed [here](#).

Helen is part of the [Team](#) at Age of Creativity, where she leads on Lived Experience and is the Age Friendly Creative Manager for Age UK Oxfordshire supporting the [Oxfordshire Age Friendly Creative Network](#).

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