



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

Video News Release

Her Majesty The Queen leads Commonwealth Day celebrations in the United Kingdom

Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, accompanied by The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, The Duke and Duchess of Sussex and The Duke of York attended the annual Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey yesterday.

Organised by The Royal Commonwealth Society, the Commonwealth Service is the largest inter-faith gathering in the United Kingdom and provides an opportunity to focus attention on this voluntary association of 53 countries and their commitment to promoting democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equality for its 2.4 billion citizens.

The Service was broadcast live on BBC One and across the BBC World Service, streamed live on the BBC YouTube channel and can be viewed at www.bbc.co.uk.

The theme for this year's Service, 'A Connected Commonwealth', sought to highlight the practical value and global engagement made possible as a result of cooperation between the culturally diverse and widely dispersed family of nations, who work together in friendship and goodwill.

Highlights of the Service included special performances by the Grammy-winning British group, Clean Bandit, and acclaimed tenor and renowned star of the stage, Alfie Boe; and endurance swimmer, ocean advocate and the UN's Patron of the Oceans, Lewis Pugh, spoke of the importance of the oceans to the Commonwealth and the world.

The event will also featured performances by The Dhol Foundation, who performed at the 2012 London Olympics Closing Ceremony; William Barton, the internationally celebrated didgeridoo artist who's prodigious talent featured at the 2018 Invictus Games; and the B Positive Choir, featuring Lurine Cato, 2018 finalists in Britain's Got Talent.

Guests of honour among the 2,000 strong congregation included the UK Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland QC, High Commissioners, Ambassadors and diplomatic representatives, senior politicians, dignitaries from across the UK and Commonwealth, faith leaders and over 800 school children and young people.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

A free-to-use VNR is available for broadcasters and online publishers.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n_mbtmAC2e7m78ulxax9waG2rmrzOMCt/view?usp=sharing

File is 1080i Quicktime.

Talent includes:

- Lewis Pugh, Ocean swimmer and environmental activist
- Baroness Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth
- Colin Anderson, 'B Positive' Choir member (performer at the service)
- Alfie Boe, Renowned Tenor (performer at the service)
- Philippa Rene, 'Tropical Flowers Segga Dancers' (performer at the service)
- William Barton, Didgeridoo Artist (performer at the service)

Background:

Commonwealth Day: #CommonwealthDay

- Commonwealth Day is an opportunity to promote the Commonwealth's shared values of peace, democracy and equality and to celebrate the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's 53 member countries.
- The year 2019 marks 42 years since Commonwealth Day became a global celebration marked on the same day every year - the second Monday in March.
- Find out more: thecommonwealth.org/commonwealthday

The Commonwealth: #Commonwealth

- The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and sovereign countries. Its members have agreed to pursue shared goals such as development, democracy and peace. These values are expressed in the Commonwealth Charter.
- The Commonwealth spans the globe, including both advanced economies and developing countries, in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Its combined population is 2.4 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged under 30. Thirty members are small states, with a population under two million, of which 24 are island nations.
- Most countries have similar legal and governance systems and a shared language. Although they have much in common, every country is unique.
- A network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations help countries to put Commonwealth values and principles into action.
- Find out more: thecommonwealth.org/fastfacts

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) @TheRCSLondon

- The Royal Commonwealth Society is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.
- Founded in 1868, it is non-partisan, is independent of governments, and is supported by public generosity.
- The Society engages with youth, civil society, business, and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth.
- Find out more: thercs.org

A Connected Commonwealth #connectedcommonwealth

- This year's theme is based on the values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter, which aims to leave no one behind.
- Building upon previous themes, this year's theme explores how the diverse countries of the Commonwealth are connected through culture, environment and the desire to build communities fit for everyone.

- Young people, who make up 60% of the Commonwealth's population, have an important role in building sustainable, secure, fair and prosperous societies.

Information about performers:

Lewis Pugh, OIG (ocean swimmer, environment campaigner)

Lewis Pugh is an endurance swimmer and an ocean advocate. Over 30 years he has pioneered swims in the most vulnerable ecosystems on earth to campaign for their protection. He was the first to swim across the North Pole and, last year, to swim the full length of the English Channel. In 2013, the United Nations appointed him UN Patron of the Oceans. In 2015, Lewis helped create the largest protected area in the world in the Ross Sea off Antarctica. He grew up in the UK, Malta and South Africa.

The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland QC

Patricia Scotland took office as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in April 2016. She serves the 53 governments and 2.4 billion citizens of the Commonwealth. Born in Dominica, she moved to the UK at an early age. A lawyer, she became both the youngest and first black woman to be appointed Queen's Counsel. She is the only woman since the post was created in 1315 to be Attorney General for England and Wales.

Colin Anderson, 'B Positive' Choir member (performer at the service)

The B Positive Choir is the choir of NHS blood donation. It comprises people whose lives are affected by the lifesaving power of blood donation. Its members include donors and recipients, people with conditions such as sickle cell, and people who work with blood. The NHS needs 600 first time blood donors every day, especially young donors and black donors, to help ensure patients get the best-matched blood. In 2018, the choir reached the final of Britain's Got Talent, and their campaign continued with the NHS70 celebrations on BBC Breakfast, the NHS Windrush 70 event in Manchester, and performances at festivals around the country.

Alfie Boe (performer at the service)

Alfie Boe is cemented as The Nation's Tenor and one of the best-loved vocalists of his generation. A hugely successful recording artist, Alfie has achieved four top ten solo albums in his career. Alfie's exceptional voice has made him Britain's biggest-selling tenor, who has triumphed on theatre stages and in concert halls around the world. Alfie has two UK #1 albums under his belt and over 1 million copies sold for 'Together' and 'Together Again' combined, made with his great friend Michael Ball OBE.

Philippa René, 'Tropical Flowers Séga Dancers' (performer at the service)

Tropical Flowers Séga Dancers are a group of female British Mauritian dancers based in South London. Founded in 1999, the troupe formed between cousins who all shared the same passion for dancing. Primarily starting out at family parties, the group gradually moved into performing at more recognisable events within the Mauritian community and elsewhere. To date, Tropical Flowers has six members who continue the tradition of séga dancing here in the UK.

William Barton, Didgeridoo Artist (performer at the service)

Born in Mount Isa in Queensland, Australia, William Barton has been playing the didgeridoo for over 20 years. During this time, he has forged an international profile as a multi-instrumentalist and composer in the classical musical world, performing with the Philharmonic Orchestras of London and Berlin and the acclaimed Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra. William's unique talent has also been featured at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2018 opening ceremonies of the Gold

Coast Commonwealth Games and the Sydney Invictus Games. With his prodigious musicality and the quiet conviction of his Kalkadungu heritage, he has vastly expanded the horizons of the didgeridoo.

Media Contact:

The Royal Commonwealth Society

Susan Handley

+44 (0)20 7747 6416

susan.handley@clgf.org.uk

www.thercs.org

@TheRCSLondon