FOCUS

A world party

From a yacht race in Kingston harbour to a 12-hour extravaganza on St Helena, the Jubilee was celebrated across the globe, says **Samantha Whitaker**

On Monday 4 June, more than 4,200 beacons were lit at sunset, creating a chain of light that began in New Zealand, Tonga and Australia, and stretched across the globe to Buckingham Palace in London, where Her Majesty lit the final beacon on stage to close the Diamond Jubilee Concert. Originally used for communication, the tradition of lighting beacons has become a symbol of unity. Bruno Peek, pageant-master of the beacons, said: "We set out to mark the year by having 2,012 beacons worldwide, which would have been the most ever for this type of occasion. To reach double that figure reflects the national and worldwide respect and affection for The Queen."

In Kenya a particularly special beacon marked the spot where, in 1952, Princess Elizabeth first heard that her father had died. "It was an honour to light the beacon at the Treetops Hotel in Aberdare National Park, surrounded by elephants, buffalo, rhino and leopards," says John Bradshaw, Head of Communications at the British High Commission in Kenya. "It was the place where 'a young girl climbed into a tree one day a Princess and climbed down the next a Queen', as described at the time by safari legend Jim Corbett." Bradshaw explains how important it was for Kenya to mark the Jubilee: "There are many special links in the relationship that bonds the UK and Kenya, and this one is particularly historic."

On the island of St Helena, part of the British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic Ocean (with Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha), there was a strong sense of patriotism among the Saints (as locals call themselves). Mike Dean, Tourism Development Executive on the island, described the 12-hour extravaganza: "The day began with a parade of uniformed contingents, followed by a village fair, a procession of floats, and plenty of music and entertainment. Four beacons were lit, one after another, forming a diamond shape, plus a fifth at Longwood. The day concluded with a spectacular firework display."





TRIUMPHANT: Jamaicans compete in a festive yacht race in Kingston harbour

The beacons, along with those on Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha, were probably the most remote in the chain. St Helena is only accessible by sea, usually via the last working Royal Mail Ship – a five-day voyage from Cape Town.

Despite talk of a move away from the monarchy, beacons were lit at four sites in Jamaica, and the Royal Jamaica Yacht Club hosted a boat parade and yacht race in Kingston Harbour – mirroring London's Jubilee flotilla – with each boat beautifully decorated in the colours of the Jamaican flag. The following week, tributes were paid to The Queen at a Special Joint Meeting of the Houses of Parliament, where the Speaker of the House of Representatives said: "The people of Jamaica have historically reserved a special place in their hearts for The Queen and the institution of the British Monarchy. This is true today, notwithstanding the many changes that have taken place in the world, and in the relationship between Jamaica and the UK."

As well as the beacons, hundreds of street parties, lunches and garden parties took place across the globe. The UK's annual Big Lunch, which is organised by the Eden Project in Southwest England and aims to encourage people to get to know their neighbours and local community, this year became the Big Jubilee Lunch and formed part of the main programme of events. An estimated six million people worldwide took part in lunches of all sizes – from small private parties in back gardens to street parties and park picnics. Peter Stewart, Big Jubilee Lunch Director, said: "This year's Big Lunch really captured the nation's imagination – not to say its love of a royal celebration."

Big Lunches were held in 70 countries, including Afghanistan, Nepal, Nigeria and the remote island nation of Tuvalu. In the Canadian Arctic, an Anglo-Canadian group on a special expedition in honour of The Queen had tea and cake on the summit of Mount Barbeau, the highest point of the Queen Elizabeth Islands. It is thought to have been the world's most remote Jubilee party.

Many British embassies, high commissions and missions overseas marked the Jubilee in other ways, including a Great British Car Rally in Abu Dhabi and a Mad Hatter's tea party in Bahrain. In Pakistan, schoolchildren buried a time capsule at the British High Commission in Islamabad. They marked the spot with a commemorative plaque and the capsule, which contains drawings of the children's communities, postcards of Pakistani landmarks, coins, newspapers, photographs and video footage, will be recovered in 25 years.

In New York, 1,000 people ran 6km through Central Park in the Great British Run. "The Queen has witnessed a remarkable amount of change in her 60 years as monarch and her ability to adapt with grace has always been a hallmark of her reign," says Danny Lopez, British Consul-General in New York. "The Diamond Jubilee is an extraordinary international occasion, and the iconic Central Park was the perfect setting for New York's own celebration."

In the UK – particularly in London – the Jubilee hype was followed by excitement about the London 2012 Games. But throughout the year, members of the Royal Family will visit Commonwealth countries on behalf of The Queen, and I am sure they will find an extremely warm welcome wherever they go.

To see video footage and photos of Jubilee celebrations around the world, visit the Jubilee Pinterest Board at pinterest.com/foreignoffice/diamond-jubilee.

ISLAND PRIDE: Locals on the island of St Helena showed their colours with a patriotic parade





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Lunches were held in 70 countries, including Afghanistan and Nigeria

HISTORIC PLACE: Special celebrations at Treetops (right), where The Queen found out she had acceded to the throne

GLOBAL FAMILY: The Queen and Prince Philip revisit Treetops Hotel during a four-day tour of Kenya in 1983 (left)

