

Watford Celebration 2016 and Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday

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'We thought Watford Celebration 2015, our tenth anniversary, would be our last Celebration, but it was not. Participants of last year and some members on the Watford Celebration team insisted that we should not give up and that this wonderful event should go on. Therefore with a limited number of members on our committee we went ahead and produced another inspiring event celebrating the rich diversity of Watford. This year, as the nation was celebrating her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday we decided to include it in our programme. We sent her Majesty an invitation letter to which she kindly responded apologising for not being able to come but sending us some wonderful words of appreciation:

'Her Majesty was most interested to learn of this event, which will involve activities, workshops and discussions for the local community to promote multicultural and inter-faith awareness in Watford. The Queen appreciated your kind words on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday and, in return, has asked me to send her warm good wishes to all concerned' letter signed by the Chief Clerk to the Queen.

The event on Bank Holiday Monday 30th May saw over 1,000 people streaming into the Multi Cultural Community Centre throughout the afternoon. Accordion music and Tabla followed by 'God save the Queen' and 'Happy Birthday Your Majesty' started the afternoon programme. Dignitaries, among them the Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Stuart Nagler JP, the Deputy of the Watford Borough Council, a representative of the Elected Mayor and the Freeman of the Borough of Watford, spoke and cut Her Majesty's 90th birthday cake.

The programme followed with a display of colours, dances and lively music from a great variety of communities: Chinese, Indian, African, Caribbean, Portuguese, Polish, English, Japanese and more. The international buffet satisfied all the hungry attendees. Children enjoyed a bouncy castle outside and various craft activities. Next door, in St Michael and All Angels Church, a model railway and an exhibition of the Royal visits to Watford was on display to the delight of everyone. In the vestry an interfaith discussion on 'How can Religion bring Wholeness to People, in the Families, Local Communities and the World?' brought together representatives from various faiths in an atmosphere of openness and dialogue.

Now should we have another Watford Celebration next year? Yes, said everyone and the Elected Mayor of Watford joined in and said: 'Yes, that is exactly what we want'. Even though we had a reduced committee this year and the sponsorships were much smaller than previous years, we managed to do it. On the day a great number of volunteers appeared and inspired us all with their dedication and great community spirit.

Many thanks to everyone and see you all next year for our 12th anniversary!