

THE QUEEN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The British Embassy held its annual celebrations for the official Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II this year on 8th June in Aleppo and on 12th June in Damascus.

Our celebrations in Aleppo were particularly memorable this year considering Aleppo's position as City of Islamic Culture. The history and richness of the Islamic culture merged with the historical British-Syrian relations in the city: Our Consulate in Aleppo is the oldest Consulate in British history, originally established in the sixteenth century.

Celebrations in Aleppo were organised by Alexander Akras, our Honorary Consul, and were held again in the beautiful ICARDA gardens. We were pleased to meet old and new friends and colleagues during the evening's event. In Damascus, the Party was held in the somewhat smaller, yet perfectly tended garden of the Ambassador's Residence. For both occasions we heard traditional bagpipe music played by a piper from Tayforth University Officers Training Corps pipe band, flown in especially for the two receptions.

Once again, Embassy staff and their families were pleased to receive guests of all nationalities and invite them to enjoy great British hospitality. During the course of the evening, Her Majesty's Ambassador, Mr Peter Ford highlighted the cooperation, friendship and understanding between Syria and the United Kingdom by announcing the launch of the Embassy's new website*, and cutting a Union Jack birthday cake with a Syrian sword.

The exact date the Queen's Official Birthday is celebrated varies from country to country, and is usually in June, rather than on the Queen's actual birthday, April 21 (born 1926). In the United Kingdom, the Queen's Official Birthday is marked by the ceremony of Trooping the Colour, and King Edward VII (reigned 1901-10) moved the ceremony to that date in the hope of good weather.



* The new British Embassy website can be found at: <http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk/syria>