



Even with a few days perspective, I'm finding it hard to grasp fully what happened on Monday. The events themselves – in Glasgow, Saint Symphorien, across Kent and at Westminster Abbey – and the way in which the British people responded to them, were unlike anything I can ever recall happening before.

We all remember Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012, but they were entirely different: occasions laden with celebration, success and huge pride.



Sacrifice



But it was pride of a different sort we saw on Monday. The pride we experience as we remember the sacrifice that others made for us, not in dull resignation to their fate but in hope for a better future for those who would come after. The pride that sits alongside grief, as we remember the heroism, and quiet gallantry, shown by so many millions of our forebears - both in Britain and the wider Commonwealth community – in that far off time.

I had the privilege of attending the service in Glasgow that began the day. Coming, as it did, just hours after – and a few miles away from - the closing ceremony for the Commonwealth Games the previous evening, there was a wonderful symmetry to the two occasions.

Each entirely different in tone, each yoked to one another by pride and fellowship.

Magical

Later in Belgium, the chosen setting of the military cemetery in Saint Symphorien had an almost magical quality, made all the more poignant by the interplay of light and shade as late afternoon became early evening, and the words and music captured that most elusive of emotions: remembrance.



Kent's Tributes

I wrote to you just last week about the array of events taking place across Kent and the constituency: the drumhead service at Maidstone's Brenchley Gardens War Memorial, the Maidstone Memories exhibition of photographs, postcards and posters, Benenden's befitting tribute to families of their 32 fallen and

Marden's display of military memorabilia.

Just a few of the moving and memorable gestures that took place across our county.

Respectful, quiet and understated

The day ended in Westminster, creating a different symmetry. People gathered in the Abbey, just a few yards from Parliament and Whitehall where, precisely one hundred years before, the decision to go into war was taken.



As the lights were put out in the Abbey, one by one, so the final hour played out. Around three or four million households across the UK joined in with their own private and personal ceremonies and acts of remembrance: putting out their lights and quietly making the connection to a hundred years earlier.

This, I think, was our country at its best. Respectful, quiet and understated. I am immensely proud to have played a tiny part in the planning and realisation of everything that happened on Monday. And I am proud of the tireless work put in by my friends and colleagues, and all the other organisations that played their parts so brilliantly.

Most of all though, Monday made me simply so proud to be British, a hundred years on.