**GOVERNOR CAPES’ SPEECH - Queen’s Birthday Party, Plantation House, 26 April 2014**

Good afternoon everyone.

From Tamara and from me, a very warm welcome to Plantation House. Thank you for joining us this afternoon to mark the birthday of our much loved Sovereign. While there are many other people we would also have liked to invite, there must of course be a ceiling on numbers; but we will refresh the list again next year.

Her Majesty’s reign is now just one year short of matching the 63 years of our longest reigning Monarch, Queen Victoria.

And as we celebrate Her Majesty’s birthday and wish her well, we should give thanks for her lifetime of commitment and service to her people. During her long reign of 62 years Her Majesty has been a constant source of strength and comfort for her people. Her Majesty is respected around the world and here in St Helena.

As we celebrate here this afternoon we think also of Her Majesty’s loyal subjects, our family members, friends and colleagues, on Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha.

In just a few minutes I will invite you to join me in a loyal toast to Her Majesty but before I do that a few other matters.

I spoke a moment ago of commitment and service, two qualities to which Her Majesty attaches great importance. I know that many of you here today share that view and indeed a number of you have been recognised by Her Majesty for your service and commitment.

Today it’s my pleasure to announce that two more people have been recognised with the Queen’s Certificate for their contribution to St Helena.

The first award goes to **Mr Lionel Lawrence.** Lionel’s working career commenced in 1949 when, at the age of 15 years, he was employed as an apprentice in the Agriculture and Forestry Department. At the age of 18 he was promoted to the post of Livestock Inspector where his responsibilities required him to be a member of the 24-hour on-call team. At that time, the department had no transport, which meant that Lionel often had to walk many miles to treat animals in need of attention. In 1978 he was given the opportunity to undertake a practical veterinary training course in Mauritius, developing skills which he put into practice on return to the Island. Lionel retired in 1991, having served the Department for a total of 42 years.

In addition to his working career, Lionel had a high profile in the community, holding positions in many social and sporting organisations. Well done and thank you Lionel.

The second award for the Queen’s Certificate of Honour goes to the late **Mrs Shirley Anderson-Leo**. Shirley was a dedicated professional, who spent over 40 years working as a Registered General Nurse and Midwife. She gave 100% commitment to those in her care and worked many, many hours over and above those expected of her. In caring for her patients, Shirley always treated them with dignity and respect. She set and demanded high standards of care from her nursing colleagues and was a role model for many student nurses who trained on St Helena. She was an inspiration to many who worked with her, not just those in the nursing profession.

Even when she was diagnosed last year with a terminal illness, Shirley remained an inspiration to those with similar conditions by openly discussing her illness and offering advice to others. Her Certificate will be presented to her family. God bless you Shirley.

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Today is also an opportunity to recognise the academic achievements of some of our younger people who have returned from study in the United Kingdom or are preparing for study abroad.

Those who strive to not only better themselves but to improve the Island’s skill base, are vital to the future prosperity of the island as we prepare to embrace the challenges and opportunities that will come with air access………….now less than two years away.

Over recent months we have welcomed back to St Helena:

- **Ricardo Fowler** who gained a diploma in Engineering at Southampton College.

Ricardo is now employed with Connect St Helena and has shared his experiences with current Prince Andrew students.

- **April Lawrence** gained a degree in Sociology and Psychology from Portsmouth University. April is now a Social Worker within the Health and Social Welfare Directorate.

- **Nikita Crowie** graduated with the Chartered Institute of legal executives, following three years of training at Bristol City College and is now employed within legal services specialising in land related activities.

- **Tara Thomas** was a awarded a Chevening Scholarship at the London School of Business and Finance where she obtained an MBA degree with distinction and is now putting her skills to work on Island.

And shortly we will be wishing farewell to:-

**Robyn Sim** who has been offered a place on a three year Teacher training course at the University of Hertfordshire.

- And **Matt Joshua** who will be taking up a place on a three year Diploma in Hotel Management at the International Hotel School in Cape Town.

To both Robyn and Matt we wish you well with your studies, and to Ricardo, April, Nikita and Tara……well done, it’s good to have you back.

And, just before I propose that toast to Her Majesty, I must register my thanks to the amazing **Debbie Stroud,** her great team at Plantation House and all the others that she co-opted or arm twisted into helping to make all the arrangements for this afternoon. Thank you Debbie.

And finally my thanks also to another incredibly hardworking Saint, our Honourable Speaker and man of many other talents, Eric Benjamin, who with his colleagues has provided the music this afternoon. Thank you Eric

And so please join me now in a loyal toast to Her Majesty …………The Queen!