

## Royal Celebrations

Ewelme News, Aug-Sept 2012, Aug-Sep 2021

The earliest record for a coronation is for one that almost didn't happen. King Edward VII developed appendicitis 2 days before the ceremony scheduled for June 26<sup>th</sup> 1902. Ewelme's plans were made - a special noon church service followed by a 'banquet' at 2.0 pm in Fords Farm tithe barn for those over school age. After a cricket match between married and single men, tea would follow for children at 4.0 pm at The Old Rectory, and then sports on Cow Common, with music, dancing and a bonfire. The food supply was already bought and mostly cooked (e.g. beef and plum pudding at Wheatfield); with beer kindly donated or bought from Messrs Brakspear for those villages without a strong Temperance Movement. The Palace directed that all festivities should go ahead so it was decided to hold the tea and dinner on the 26<sup>th</sup> to avoid waste, but the mood was sombre. The corpulent monarch managed to survive his operation and was crowned two months later. A revised event was held with teas served in the schoolroom for 116 children, and then 169 adults. The church bells were rung three times during the day, with a drawn cricket match between marrieds and singles plus sports on the Common. Dancing in the evening concluded with a bonfire on the Common and *'the successful sending up of two fire -balloons, heated by methylated spirit'*. These disappeared towards Swyncombe!

The coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in June 1911 began with a church service at 12.15 pm, followed by a substantial dinner for over 200 in Fords Farm barn of roast and boiled beef, mutton, ham, tarts and jellies. After loyal toasts, the company adjourned to Cow Common for sports. The children were served a splendid tea at 4.0 pm and the programme finished with country dancing. At 10.0 pm many villagers went to the top of Rabbits Hill to view the numerous celebratory bonfires lit in the area.

For George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 a carnival parade wound through the village. After which there were races and 'Bowling for a pig'. An old Maypole had been found in a barn, this was renovated, and Miss Walker taught the school children some dances to a piano wheeled out for the occasion. A party in the tithe barn was fuelled by barrels of beer, supplied by Tom Dymond, landlord of The Lamb Inn.

The coronation celebration for George VI and Queen Elizabeth on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1937, was a grand affair. The church service at 10.0 am, was followed an hour later by a brass band procession of the May queen through the village to her crowning at 11.45. Four children were dressed to represent the 4 countries of the United Kingdom. Joyce Winfield was 'Britannia' in a white gown with a large 'golden' helmet on her head. This was a brass fireman's helmet from the old fire engine kept in the Orpwood's Levers Farm barn (Church Farm Barn)! In the afternoon Maypole dancing preceded children's sports, organised according to ages from 5 to 18. Commemorative mugs were presented to children after their tea at 4.0 pm. The adults had their tea in Fords Farm barn at the same time. Surprisingly, straight after the meal at 5.0 pm, Adults Sports races started on the common for competitors from 18 to 65 years divided into age groups and singles and marrieds. They commenced with a Ladies Tug-of-war for a team of 8 and concluded for ladies with a High Jump. Men had Tug-of-war, 50 yards sprints, plus a Half Mile race; Throwing a Cricket Ball, Apple & Bucket and the High Jump. Married couples competed in a 50 yard 3-Legged race. After the presentation of prizes, the King's Speech was broadcast. Fireworks at 9.30 pm were followed at 10.30 by a dance in the School Room.



**The 1953 Ewelme Coronation Procession.**



**Cynthia Winfield being crowned at the 1953 Carnival**

Queen Elizabeth II's coronation on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1953, began with Holy Communion at 8.0 am. The church bells then rang for half an hour before Rector Bolton took a special service of Thanksgiving. At 2.30 pm a Carnival Procession assembled at Lower End and processed through the village to Levers Farm Cricket Meadow (behind the new churchyard) for the crowning of the Coronation Carnival Queen – Miss Cynthia Winfield. At 3.30 pm there was a Fancy Dress Parade in two classes for adults 16 and over and children 9-15. After the presentation of Coronation souvenirs and prizes by the Carnival Queen, there were unnamed Fun and Games, and at 4.30 pm a Village Tea in Levers Farm barn. A Cricket Match at 5.30 was followed by a bonfire and fireworks, culminating with dancing at the Kings Pool.

The Queen's Silver Jubilee on Tuesday 7th June 1977 commenced at 1.30 pm from the Shepherds Hut with a Parade of festooned floats representing different organisations and families, aiming to win the prize of a barrel of beer. Nearly the whole village took part. (The Gilbey family dressed up as Hawaiians, with grass skirts made of baler twine!) Colin Collyier the coalman, brought a gaily decorated pony and trap to transport children. On the sports field Junior races at 2.30 were held before a tea for children and senior citizens. Unspecified Adult Sports and Entertainment featured pop group 'Mungo Jerry' performing, as the band's drummer lived by Kings Pool. However, not everything went smoothly in the cold and wet weather. Rector Williams kept announcing events that did not happen, and there were not enough Jubilee mugs for the children! A worse disaster followed. Farmer Bill Edwards generously donated a bullock for an ox roast to be carved at 8.0 pm. Unfortunately, the volunteer RAF chefs ignored advice to remove its hide, stating that was how they did it in Germany! As a result, it failed to cook through properly, and was condemned by the Council Health Inspector. To save the day, local butcher Des Dix raced around to source tins of corned beef, whilst villagers raided their own kitchens. Not only did the bullock die in vain, but an unwelcome postscript was RAF Benson having the effrontery to charge the village £150 for the fiasco!

The Queen's Golden Jubilee on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2002 took the form of a Grand Fete on the sports field and opened at 2.0 pm by popular Radio 2 disc-jockey 'Stewpot' Ed Stewart. Traditional attractions included stalls, Morris Dancers, Maypole dancing and the Chalgrove Brass Band. The children had their usual races, a Roundabout and a distribution of 100 Jubilee mugs. Adults completed in a Tug-o-War, Test-your-Strength and a Royal Theme Fancy Dress competition. The highlight was RAF Benson flying in a Puma and a Merlin helicopter. Eager queues formed to go inside, and the Fete's grand finale was their take off! (The noise and the downdraft must have been awesome). Richard Luker's magnificent fireworks display rounded off the day.

The most recent Royal celebration was the soggy Diamond Jubilee on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, beginning with a Special Church Service. The Street was then closed from midday until 9.0 pm for a Street Party. Unfortunately, it rained nonstop, and the event became a 'tent party', as tents kindly erected by RAF Benson made it look *'like a scene from the film M.A.S.H.'* Many of the planned events could not be held, but undeterred, a Big Tea Party commenced at 5.0 pm with prizes for the best dressed table. The children received Jubilee Mugs and competed for the best dressed Jubilee girl or boy. The Shepherds Hut hosted a rock band and at 10.30 pm fireworks lit up a dismal sky.

*Ewelme Village Archive*