

The Mammoth Peace Pudding of 1815

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The villagers of Ewelme have always celebrated important national events, the latest being the coronation of King Charles III in May. We have records from the 20th century of past jollities which have included elaborate pageants, lively street processions and festivals - the gatherings culminating with the inevitable feasting - mostly held in the Tithe Barn at Fords Farm.

The last issue of the Ewelme News featured photographs of the celebratory tea with the highly decorated cakes baked for the recent coronation. However imaginative and delicious, these efforts pale when compared to a gastronomic undertaking of 208 years ago.

Although we did not have any record of how important events were celebrated in the 19th century, a newspaper cutting recently added to the archive may be a clue to a joyful celebration held in the summer of 1815 to mark *'the Peace'*. The Battle of Waterloo was fought on 18th June 1815, a victory which finally ended the Napoleonic wars that had lasted almost 15 years, and the even longer French dominance over Europe. All England rejoiced, and the triumphant general, the Duke of Wellington, was richly rewarded by a grateful nation.

A report dated 19th September 1815 from a Canadian newspaper in Ontario, the Kingston Gazette, quoted from a *'London paper'* which appears to relate to Ewelme celebrating *'the Peace'*.

It is headed *'A Mammoth Pudding'*.

'At the festival given on occasion of the Peace in the village of Ewlme, [sic] the poor partook of a Pudding, which, for size and richness has scarcely been equalled: it consisted of 180 pounds of the finest flour, 90 pounds of plumbs, 48 pounds of currants, 45 pounds of sugar, 360 eggs, 30 nutmegs, 5 ozs of cloves, and 120 quarts of new milk. It was made round and boiled in a strong cloth for three days and three nights in a furnace, fixed for that purpose in a close, over which a temporary shed was erected.'

The logistics of making this pudding defies imagination, but the ingredients are specific and give rise to numerous questions. Who funded the enterprise? Who supplied the ingredients? Who were the cooks? Where was the 'shed'? We cannot totally guarantee this report was referring to our Oxfordshire Ewelme, but the balance of probabilities indicates it is, as there is no other settlement called Ewelme elsewhere in Britain with a population large enough to eat this pudding. Perhaps one day another document will be discovered to confirm it.

Nevertheless, it is a fascinating yarn - and maybe a suggestion for the organising committee of the next momentous village celebration?

Ewelme Village Archive