

Honour for Lady Hambleden

Ewelme News, Aug-Sep 1990 and May-Aug 1994

Among the recipients of honours in the recent Birthday Honours List was our own Lady Hambleden. She now has the Grand Cross of the Victorian Order where before, as she modestly said, she was only a 'Dame'.

This particular honour, like that of the Order of the Garter, is a gift from the Monarch to her Subject. It is not recommended through parliamentary channels and is therefore a personal recognition of services performed.

Lady Hambleden has attended the Queen Mother for 53 years. She began to attend Her Majesty when King George VI was crowned in 1937. Lady Hambleden was present at the Coronation and Royal Visits were confined to our own islands, especially to those places which suffered through the 'blitzes' and to those areas making their own contribution to the war effort. After the war had ended Lady Hambleden was in attendance to visits in Kenya, Rhodesia and Africa.

After the death of His Majesty, King George VI, Lady Hambleden continued in attendance on Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother. With other Ladies-in-Waiting she has given faithful and loyal service to Her Majesty who is herself tireless in her efforts to support so many organisations.

At almost 90 years of age the Queen Mother shows every indication of going on. 'How could I think of retiring when I work for someone like her', is Lady Hambleden's reply to any suggestion of stopping.

We wish Her Majesty and the Queen Mother well on her forthcoming birthday, and we are proud of Lady Hambleden's service to her and the honour she has received.

Ewelme tales of Lady Hambleden and the Queen Mother.

It was not unusual for the Queen Mother to visit Lady Hambleden on an informal basis. The 1977 Silver Jubilee Rose Festival on the 9th and 10th July had a Royal theme, with roses named after the Queen, Prince Charles, and the 'Elizabeth of Glamis' rose for the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. To the surprise of the village ladies in the church topping up the water on the 11th July, Lady Hambleden of Hill House arrived unexpectedly - accompanied by her black Labrador Jim and a Royal visitor, the Queen Mother!

When George Cannon was head teacher at Ewelme School he was in Almsmen's chapel with the school children he was explaining the various components of Duchess Alice's triple-decker tomb. Lady Hambleden walked in accompanied by the Queen Mother. One child was fascinated by the memento mori and tugging on the Queen Mother's skirt he pointed to the tomb and shrunken corpse and chortled - 'She's in there you know, and she looks like that!' George was mortified but later heard from Lady Hambleden that the story had been related at the Palace where it was found to be 'very amusing'.

Lady Hambleden was used to receiving her friend and 'boss', the Queen Mother at Hill House. One morning a phone call from Clarence House informed her the Queen Mother would like to take lunch with her. Unfortunately, Lady Hambleden had nothing suitable in the house to offer and in desperation asked Stan Cottrell at the village shop for help. Stan had been in the Royal Air Force and

had a friend in the Sergeants Mess resulting in a lunch fit for a Queen being prepared and sent to Hill House.

Obituary

Our garden provided a short cut and a level path between Hill House and The Cloisters. Lady Hambleden frequently used this route to get from one of these places to the other, yet she never presumed that it was a right of way and would always say, *'I hope you don't mind!'* before adding some other comment – usually about gardens.

This was typical of her for she was not in any way condescending but would speak and behave graciously to any whom she met. Her last two years she spent in much pain – though she tried to hide it – but went about her duties with Her Majesty the Queen Mother, as well as those of a Trustee of the Ewelme Almshouse Charity. She had a strong sense of duty right to the end. Lady Hambleden was a very faithful member of the church. She worshipped regularly at Ewelme where she had served for some time on the P.C.C. as well as being Vice-Chairman. She was a Governor of some local schools but did not become a Manager at Ewelme. However, she supported the school in many ways – its Christmas Bazaars, Sports Days and the Annual Christmas Party she provided the crackers for many years. She came once to tell the children of her work as a Lady-in-Waiting which thrilled the pupils. Apparently, Her Majesty was highly amused when she later heard of some of the questions the children had asked.

Lady Hambleden's end came peacefully on Saturday, 19th March. A special service, led by our Rector, was held at Hambleden Church on March 24th and was attended by the Queen Mother. Those of us who were privileged to attend this service joined many others paying their last respects to this gracious lady. It is difficult to imagine Ewelme without her presence and, to all her family and friends, we extend our sincere condolences.

by George Cannon, Ewelme Village Archive

[Addendum – Lord and Lady Hambleden originally lived at The Old Rectory but when her husband died she 'downsized' to Hill House].



The Old Rectory