

The Cortège Drapes of Queen Victoria

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Tribute to Queen Victoria – A keepsake from her cortège courtesy of Neil Blake.

“In all the history of the British monarchy there has never been a case in which the feeling of national grief was so deep-seated, so universal, so spontaneous.” Many similar tributes were paid to the late Queen Elizabeth II recently, but this accolade was voiced by Arthur Balfour to Parliament in praise of her great-great grandmother, Queen Victoria. The death of *‘Victoria the Good’* occurred at 6.30 pm on 22nd January 1901, and the news reached Watlington at 8.0 pm – and Ewelme shortly thereafter. Certainly, by early morning of the 23rd the reports would have spread to Ewelme’s dismayed villagers, the majority of whom had not known another monarch. Precise details of what followed at St Mary’s are not clear, but on 2nd February, the day of the funeral, and in common with other village churches there would have been the tolling of muffled church bells, and a subsequent memorial service would end with the singing of *‘God Save the King’*.



As occurred for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II this September, vast crowds lined the streets of London and Windsor to pay their respects to the ‘Old Queen’ as the cortège passed by. Neil Blake has provided the News with details of memorabilia from Queen Victoria’s funeral, given to him by a friend whose grandfather was Emmanuel Brice. His brother - Mr T B D Brice - was a tailor in Jermyn Street in the late 1890’s working for Henry Poole & Co., whose chief customer was the new King Edward VII. Shortly after the state funeral a little parcel was delivered by a close friend with the message - *‘Prinny [the King] thought you would appreciate a personal memento of the late Queen’*. It contained snippets of purple and white felt, red and gold ribbon cut from Queen Victoria’s cortège drapes, a miniature bible carved from the wood used to make her coffin, and embroidery thread wrapped in silver wire. It was treasured by three generations of the Brice family, and eventually bequeathed to Neil Blake, its current guardian.

Ewelme Village Archive