

# Ewhurst History Society Journal

## Platinum Jubilee Edition



Welcome to our special Platinum Jubilee issue where members share their memories of royal events.

Mary McMath still has the silk handkerchief she was given at school. Joan Greenwood was lucky to see the Coronation Procession in real life, whilst Hazel Munro and Val Jolly remember watching on that new-fangled invention – a TV set! Marian Heathcote also watched on the TV, but then came over from her home in Alfold to Ewhurst to see the ox-roast. Carol Woodrow was able to see the Queen in the equestrian environment in which she was most at home. Finally, Val Jolly has recently been to a garden party at Buckingham Palace, for a Duke of Edinburgh Awards ceremony. I have also been to the Palace for a Duke of Edinburgh Award and have a story about the funeral of George VI.

I have included some photographs from the Platinum Jubilee Flower Festival in Ewhurst. A big thank-you to Fiona Morrison, who did a flower arrangement 'Crown Jewels' on behalf of the History Society, and Nigel and I organised a small local history display. Thanks, also, to everyone who helped with stewarding.



*Left: Fiona's arrangement*

## **THE FUNERAL OF GEORGE VI**

**By Janet Balchin**

I was just a baby in 1953, so do not have any Coronation memories, but my story pre-dates the Coronation and goes back to the funeral of George VI. In 1952, my mother, Pamela Waddle, was working at a florist's shop in Bath, Somerset. When the King died the shop was commissioned to make the wreath that the city of Bath would send to the funeral and the owner of the shop, a Mrs Caudle, chose my mother to help her make it. The wreath featured the coat of arms of the city and the words 'City of Bath' all made in flowers. It was over 6 ft. in diameter and took them two days to make, during which time they had very little sleep and kept awake by drinking lots of coffee (unusual in those days when tea was the preferred beverage). They then accompanied it in the shop's van to Windsor Castle, where it was laid out in the grounds along with wreaths from all over the world. Going to Windsor and seeing all the other wreaths made a huge impression on my mum, as this was before the time when many people had TVs (although like many people, my parents got one a year later to watch the Coronation). My brother and I both remember a photograph of my mum and Mrs Caudle standing on either side of the wreath, but sadly neither of us can find it now. (My mother died in 2006).

## **REMINISCENCES OF THE CORONATION – 2 JUNE 1953**

**By Joan Greenwood.**

At the time of the Coronation, my father was the vicar of St Luke's Church in Deptford. This was a large Victorian structure, next to the fire station on Evelyn Street, which is now part of the South Circular. Evelyn Street is named after the diarist John Evelyn of Wotton. He had a large house named Sayers Court in Deptford the site of which is now a public park not far from St Luke's Church (now partially demolished). In addition, many of the minor roads surrounding Evelyn Street have local Surrey names such as Gosterwood Street and Abinger Grove further maintaining the link with the Wotton Estate. Our large Vicarage (still there) was at the other end of Evelyn Street sandwiched between a block of flats and a row of small shops including Griffith's General Store, Esther's sweetshop, a Chinese laundry, and a fish and chip shop owned by a Vietnamese couple.

My parents both came from large, patriotic, Presbyterian, Northern Irish families. My maternal grandmother once accused my father of being 'just one step from Rome' when he joined the Church of England! However, in spite of his defection, all was forgiven when it came to the Coronation. They decided to come over en masse and stay with us for the duration. My mother decided that, for our sleeping arrangements, we would have a men's room, a women's room and a children's room. Divan beds were split in two so that the base and the mattress could be used separately and we children – I, my sister and numerous cousins - just had floor space and sleeping bags. Very small cousins were accommodated in a series of two armchairs stuck together and one curmudgeonly old uncle insisted on having his own personal space in my father's study.

The evening before the big event we all staggered in light rain up to Surrey Docks (now Surrey Quays) tube station armed with deck chairs, blankets, waterproofs, union jacks, a little portable radio and shopping bags filled with flasks of tea and coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, and cake (no sweets because these were still rationed) and pockets filled with 'useful' string. We were early so we were able to bag Dad's chosen spot on the Mall where we could see both the outgoing procession from Buckingham Palace to the Abbey and the longer returning procession. As more and more people arrived, the excitement and noise built up to fever pitch and we were glad that we'd booked our space. As the steady drizzle continued, it soon became obvious that sitting in the deck chairs wasn't a good idea, so instead we turned them into tents (courtesy of the string) and sat underneath to have our midnight feast. And then we waited so buoyed up with excitement and adrenalin that sleep was the last thing on our minds.

In the early hours of the morning, paperboys ran past shouting 'Everest is climbed', so newspapers were quickly purchased and the news broadcast to the rest of us. By this time we were all very wet in spite of our waterproofs and our 'tent' but somehow it didn't seem to matter very much. As dawn approached, street musicians and acrobats entertained us and the noise became even more raucous. Then, as it became time for the procession to start, the police arrived and stood at the edge of the road, which annoyingly blocked our view. However, a very kindly policeman hoisted my young cousin onto his shoulders and I and the other children were placed right in the front. Brilliant.

Then, at last, the procession started. I can't begin to describe the magnificence of the Armed Forces' Cavalry Regiments on their prancing horses as they escorted the crowned heads of Europe and the Commonwealth and other foreign dignitaries in their splendid carriages. We listened to Richard Dimbleby's commentary on the radio so that we were able to identify who we were looking at but I'm afraid most of these splendid personnel just merged into one amorphous glamorous mass. Only one stood out for me, and that was Queen Salote of Tonga. She insisted on the top of her carriage remaining open, much to the discomfort of her fellow passenger who didn't appreciate being soaked by our inclement British weather. So there she stood, all magnificent six foot of her, ignoring the rain and waving enthusiastically in a most un-royal fashion as we flapped our flags madly and cheered and waved and shouted at the tops of our voices.

And then, at last, came the queen. Our new Queen Elizabeth II. At my school, which had been founded by Queen Elizabeth I, it was impressed on us that we were now the New Elizabethans and we were therefore destined for a glorious future. So we were doubly impressed by this beautiful, tiny porcelain doll who seemed so young and yet had so much responsibility on her shoulders. We made ourselves hoarse with our cheering and we could sense that there was a collective love for her and an aspiration to make this new reign memorable.

Then it was all over. We packed up our sodden equipment and staggered back to the tube and home. We indulged ourselves with fish and chips from the local shop and hot baths (children sharing) and then back to our sleeping quarters. A few days later we all went to the



cinema at Leicester Square to see on the Newsreel all the bits we'd missed including the ceremony in the Cathedral, Then the Irish relatives went home while Mum and Dad put the house back together, reassembled the beds, and did mammoth washes in Mum's old Parnell washing machine. Everything was back to normal - but it was a long time before Coronation fever abated.

### A CORONATION SOUVENIR HANDKERCHIEF

*This handkerchief was given to Mary McMath, when she was at boarding school in Yorkshire. She also remembers going to see the Coronation and stayed in London with an aunt. They managed to find a space on the pavement at 6.00am, but Mary was particularly impressed by the people who had bought home-made periscopes to view the procession. She also remembers Queen Salote waving to the crowds as she passed.*



## **CORONATION MEMORIES**

**By Hazel Munro**

I was brought up in Hanworth, Middlesex. On the morning of the Coronation all the mothers were getting ready for the big tea, the dads were busy putting up tables and chairs in the road. We were not a big road and the dads decided to close each end of the road, for this they used everyone's house chairs.

Early afternoon. At that time only two people had televisions in our road, so we divided up, by invitation and spent the afternoon watching the coronation on our neighbour's TV.

After the Coronation was finished we had our street party in my road, all the mothers made sandwiches and cakes, and all the children were given a mug, we wore fancy hats, balloons on the back of our chairs, following the tea we all sang ' God save our Queen' and waved flags. After more play time for the children and social time with drinks for the adults the day finally came to an end; it was a good day, and gave everyone a lot of memories.

## **JUNE 2ND 1953 - MEMORIES OF A HAPPY DAY**

**By Val Jolly**

My mother, sister and I had worked hard the day before making lots of cakes and the famous "Coronation Chicken". About 20 neighbours came to enjoy the day watching our brand new TV. The only one in our road.

I was made to wear a dress and told I must keep my shoes on! We were back in our house for a few days to watch the Coronation. Usually we lived on our sailing boat from Easter until October half term. I must have been well into the summer routine of shoes for school only, or, when very cold, last years sandals with the toes cut out when on the boat. I remember I was made to sit on the floor in front of the TV. I was very impressed by The Queen getting into an amazing coach. I loved all the horses, smart Guards, Coachmen etc. The Queen looked so calm in such a beautiful dress. When everyone started to come out of Westminster Abbey the bells started to ring. I was quite used to church bells but these sounded so wonderful and happy.

We all ate too much delicious food and the adults had wine. This was unheard of other than on Christmas Day!

## MEMORIES OF THE QUEEN

By Marian Heathcote

You have to be of a certain age to remember those schooldays when your classroom contained rows of wooden desks, each one with its attached seat, lift up lid and inkwell. I have a clear memory of one day at my school in Alfold where I sat at such a desk. Our teacher gave us the sad news that King George VI had died peacefully in his sleep and that we had a new Queen. On returning home, I remember listening to sombre music being played on our radio. It was February 6th 1952. Preparations for the Queen's Coronation began in April and the sadness at the death of her father was replaced with great excitement as everyone looked forward to the events that were to take place 14 months later on June 2nd 1953.

The Queen had insisted that her Coronation should take place before the television cameras and purchases of TV sets escalated. My Auntie Ethel had bought one and we were invited to join the family at her house in Cranleigh to watch this momentous event. The screen was very small and the images, although described as black and white were, in fact, rather grey and grainy but we didn't care because, for us, this was a first and we were able to witness the processions and the whole ceremony. The service lasted almost 3 hours and although I didn't want to miss a moment of it, as a child I have to confess, that I found some of it rather boring. I remember feeling sorry for the young Queen as she looked so uncomfortable with the heavy crown on her head. After sitting still for so long we were ready for a change of scenery and my father drove us to Ewhurst, the village where he had been born and brought up. News of the roasting of an Ox on the Recreation Ground had reached us. The weather was not typical of a summer's day and we all gathered as close to the dying embers of the fire as possible. I was looking forward to tasting something as exotic as Ox but remember being very disappointed that there was very little left on the carcass. It had been served exclusively to Parishioners following the official carving in the morning.



*Preparations for the Ox Roast on Ewhurst Recreation Ground.*



Fast forward to 1957 and I am at school in Guildford. Our Class Teacher announces that Queen Elizabeth and The Duke of Edinburgh will be visiting the town on June 27th and that they will be driving past our school in Farnham Road. This was, however, a day when we were due to take one of our O Level Exams. Our initial disappointment that we would miss seeing her was soon turned to relief when we were told that we had been given very special permission for the exam to start early so that we could be out on the pavement to watch her pass by. Guildford was celebrating 700 years since the granting of its Charter and the Queen was to receive the traditional gift of a Plum Pudding on the balcony of the Guildhall in the High Street and then be driven to view progress at the site of Guildford Cathedral, which was still under construction. The Royal couple were going to sign bricks, something that we had been urged to do as a way of fund raising. I doubt if they bought theirs for 2s 6d as we had! The exam was over and with mounting anticipation we stood, flags in hands awaiting the drive past. Her car drove past all too quickly so my sighting was brief but my teenage self was very excited that I had caught a glimpse of our Queen.

## MY CONTACT WITH HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

By Carol Woodrow

All through the 1970s and 1980s my husband was employed as coach painter/coachman to Alan Bristow, the helicopter entrepreneur, who lived at Baynards. Bristow was a keen equestrian and represented Great Britain, with the Duke of Edinburgh, in carriage driving. Every summer my husband's job took him with the four-in-hand driving team throughout this country and Europe, to France, Germany and Holland and, in the days of the cold war, to Poland and Hungary, with Prince Phillip, the Queen's horses and the Household Cavalry. Prior to these events he was able to stay in the Royal Mews Windsor and when they competed at Sandringham a party was always put on for the competitors.



*Above: Carol was lucky to see the Queen in an informal and relaxed setting.*



*Right: the Duke of Edinburgh driving his four-in-hand carriage*

My girls were babies then so I could only go to local shows in this country, but I was able to see the Queen up close and informally on a number of occasions. She would drive her Land Rover to the cross-country course and hold the leader horses while Prince Phillip stopped to water them. Initially he competed with The Queen's Windsor Greys but then went on to his Cleveland Bay horses and finally as he grew older the Fell ponies, which the Queen rides. The Household Cavalry also competed with a team of horses.

The British Team won Bronze Medal at The World Games 1984 in Hungary. After Mr Bristow's retirement his Head Coachman, Micky Flynn, went on, until his death in 2011, to be Coachman for Prince Phillip, and now Louise Wessex, Prince Phillip's granddaughter, is continuing his love of carriage driving with his Fell ponies.

## **A DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD PRESENTATION GARDEN PARTY**

**By Val Jolly**

Friday May 20th 2022 was a very special day for me. I was invited by HRH The Earl of Wessex to join the celebration event for young people who had achieved a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Buckingham Palace Gardens. My granddaughter, Jemima, had nominated me as her guest.

We had to be at The Palace at 9.30am so it was an early start. While waiting for the train from Guildford we noticed a number of very smart young people and adults who must have been going our way. Walking through Green Park we were certainly going in the right direction. It was great people watching. Tourists stopped to look at us! We met Mima's friend Ellie and her mother. While walking round the garden we noticed the snipers on the Palace roof! The rain started as we headed for the tea tent. Very well organised with tea in D of E travel mugs and fantastic Cup cakes. I had my own gluten free cake. Some well-known people gave inspiring talks. The Careers Stage had Kelly Hoppen from "Dragon's Den" and the Adventure Stage had twins, Ross and Hugo Turner who had rowed across The Atlantic.



*Above: Val's special gluten-free cup cake*

*Right: Her granddaughter Jemima (right) and friend*





At 11.00am it was time to line up by the West Terrace for The Earl Of Wessex and Forfar. KG GCVO. (Prince Edward) His speech was of welcome and congratulations to all the young people who had completed all the many and various challenges to be awarded their Gold D of E Award. The Earl walked down between the casual line up of people, chatting to many. We had a very good view of him talking to people opposite, just a few feet away.

There was a lovely relaxed party feel with 100s of happy people. Despite the rain, which of course was typically D of E weather!

Certainly a day to remember and a huge Thank You to Mima for taking me !

## **MEMORIES OF RECEIVING THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S GOLD AWARD AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE**

**By Janet Balchin**

I have also attended a Duke of Edinburgh Award ceremony, but mine was indoors. I went in October 1974 and was allowed to take one guest. Normally this would have been a parent but as I had got married in March, I took Nigel. My Sea Ranger Captain, who had overseen my progress, through the activities, was also invited. It was the 63rd Awards Presentation. This was before the days when the palace was open to the public so it was quite an occasion to be going inside. Like Val, I remember the tourists watching as we were allowed through the gates. About 780 young people were presented with awards and we gathered in rooms according to the area of the country; I was in the Green Drawing Room. Val describes a casual line up, but when I went it was very formal and girls were expected to wear white gloves. We stood in a semicircle with our guests seated on chairs opposite. Each room led to another and the royal party processed through. The Duke came in and said a few general words and after speaking to two individuals at random moved on to the next room. Someone following behind then gave us our badges. Sadly I have no photographs as cameras were not allowed.