



CORONATIONS AND JUBILEES

To quote Mr Napier, who wrote a history of Lingfield - "Lingfield has never lagged behind other villages in its observance of national festivals". From the records, we also know that Blindley Heath, Baldwins Hill and Dormansland actively took part in any suitable celebrations.

George III

John Steer of Comforts Place Farm records in his farm ledger on 23rd October 1809, that Messrs Hall and Chandler for the subscribers bought a cow at 4 shillings a stone, £16. 10s. 0d. The cow with 2 sheep, weight 20 stones at 5s. 6d (£5. 10s. 0d) and £15. 15s. 0d worth of bread was given to the Poor Inhabitants of Godstone on 25th day of the present instant, October, being the day King George the third entered the fiftieth year of his reign. Also a pint of beer was provided for every family in the Parish. This would have included Blindley Heath and South Godstone.

Queen Victoria

The next records found of any extent are those for the **Golden Jubilee in 1887** of Queen Victoria. Lingfield celebrations began with a peal of bells at 6.00am and continued at intervals throughout the day. A special service according to the 'prescribed form' was held in the Parish Church at 11.00am. Tea was provided at 5 o'clock in a field in the vicarage grounds. A large company assembled shortly before that hour and about 430 sat down - 163 adults and 267 children. Sports with prizes, donated by Thomas Weller of Waterside, followed the tea until around 9 o'clock. Books were given to the most deserving at the Day and Sunday Schools.

A Parish meeting was held on Wednesday evening 2nd June 1897 to consider in what permanent form the **Diamond Jubilee** of 'Her most Gracious Majesty the Queen' should be commemorated.

Mr Leigh offered the use of stands and grounds at the racecourse on Saturday 28th June. Mr Lowdell proposed, and Mr A Kelsey seconded, a new clock for the Parish Church. Dr Austin proposed, and Mr Love seconded, the building of an Institute. This was carried and the building was to be called the Victoria Jubilee Institute. Unfortunately Queen Victoria died before it was complete and it became the Victoria Memorial Institute. It has recently been renamed the Victoria Sports and Social Club.

Blindley Heath celebrated the Queen's **Diamond Jubilee in 1897** with a procession from South Godstone station to the Assembly Room where a meat tea was provided

for 320 adults and 40 youths over 14 years of age. The band then led the way to the Common where sports and dancing took place. These were followed by a huge bonfire.

In Lingfield, Mr R White lent a field on Tuesday 22nd June and a bountiful tea was provided for upwards of 100 people. There were various games and amusements including a cricket match with 14 ladies and 11 men. The latter had to use broomsticks and fielded left-handed but still managed to win by 17 runs. The evening closed with a hearty rendition of the National Anthem.

Revellers in Blindley Heath and Lingfield could see bonfires, beacon lights and fireworks from other areas lighting up the sky.

Edward VII

Edward, Prince of Wales, became King on 22nd January 1901 when his mother, Queen Victoria, died at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

On Friday April 18th 1901 a public meeting was held in the Institute to consider the Coronation festivities. Fraser Cobham, JP, took the chair and 40 people were present. It was agreed a committee of 24 would be elected from those present to carry out the arrangement.

A meeting on 24th April 1902 adopted the programme for the celebrations and on May 8th a leaflet was circulated to certain members of the local population requesting financial assistance. Pencil notes on a copy held in the archives indicate the amount of food etc. required to feed 500 children plus adults.

The programme for 26th June 1902 was -

- 1) A tea to all children residing in the Parish, under 14 years of age
- 2) A band be engaged
- 3) A memento of the occasion to be given to the children
- 4) A tea for adults. Parents to sit with their children
- 5) A bonfire, display of fireworks and other amusements

Mr J Morter provided 1,000 mugs as mementos and the field free of charge for the fete. Everything was in hand for a real party. Edenbridge Tannery Brass Band was hired, there would be a cycle parade and sports events as well as the fireworks and the bonfire.

On Wednesday 24th June everything was thrown into disarray with the news that the King had had an operation for peritonitis and the coronation would have to be postponed until he recovered. The King, however, insisted that the celebrations should continue as planned so that the people, particularly the children, would not be disappointed.

The Lingfield committee held an emergency meeting that evening and a letter was sent to His Majesty expressing the concerns of the village at the news. It was decided to continue with the celebrations as the King desired and these took place on 26th June concluding with a monstrous bonfire. The children had their tea at 4 o'clock in the field and the adults in the Institute. A full report with all the sports results was shown in the July issue of the Church magazine.

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A balance sheet was produced showing a surplus income of £5. 10s. 0d which was given to the Victoria Memorial Institute

John Jupp, of Playstow Hall, gave an impromptu concert on 27th June which proved a popular event.

Blindley Heath had arranged similar celebrations and generous financial support had been received to provide for the entertainment. Included were sports with valuable prizes, presentation mugs of beautiful design and flags for the children. There was a bonfire and fireworks. A 'capital' brass band from London had been hired.

The day would start with a special church service at which it was hoped great numbers would attend.

The children would assemble at 4.00pm on the Common, during the sports etc to sing patriotic songs and receive their flags. (The mugs would not be available until after July 1st). Afterward they would go to the Assembly Room for tea.

The Blindley Heath committee decided to postpone the celebrations despite a financial loss. Part of these were eventually held on 9th July and reported in the Surrey Mirror on 11th July. 200 children between the ages of 4 and 14 mustered in the school playground, formed a procession and were presented with a flag. They marched to the Assembly Room for tea.

Afterwards, they received their mugs inscribed with "Blindley Heath, Surrey" and other suitable designs, and filled with ripe strawberries. Games were then held in the vicarage meadow.

The King was eventually crowned on 9th August in Westminster Abbey. Manufacturers of commemorative items made a loss at the time but they are now very collectable.

George V

George was the second son of Edward and destined for a naval career. However, his brother, Albert Victor, died from influenza on 14th January 1892. On 6th May 1910 as Prince George ascended the throne Halley's Comet blazed in the night sky at 11.45pm.

The coronation of King George and Queen Mary took place a year later on 22nd June 1911.

The weather was such that in certain areas, the celebrations were abandoned. But not in Blindley Heath or Lingfield.

Blindley Heath had their procession as usual with the sports, amusements, teas, etc. and the presentation of 250 mugs to all the children under 14 years of age.

Lingfield's preparations included an appeal for financial help as in 1901. The balance sheet shows a surplus of £49. 9s. 7d.

A programme of sports was arranged in Lingfield's new recreation ground and only at the end of the day everyone had to retreat to the school-rooms as the rain persisted.

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According to Mr Napier, one very small boy was heard to observe “ Well, it could be a lot wetter, couldn’t it?”

It had been proposed that there be a gift to the Queen on her Coronation. Every “Marie” was invited to contribute anything from one penny to £1 according to their means - a list of contributors would be kept but not how much they gave. Mrs Lewis of Lynwood was the organiser for Lingfield.

George V and Queen Mary celebrated their Silver Jubilee on 6th May 1935.

In February it was reported that a National Chain of Beacons for the Silver Jubilee, in the hands of the Boy Scouts Association, would be set up. The Surrey beacons were well in hand and they would be lit at 10.00pm. In April it was announced that the beacon for Lingfield and Dormansland would be at Dry Hill and fired by a Boy Scout, the signal being a rocket (launched from where is not known). The spectacle would be magnificent and the occasion a rare and memorable one. The scouts would have camp fire singing from 8.30pm when they hoped the public would go along to listen and join in. After lighting the beacon the National Anthem was sung, the Last Post played and finally “Abide with Me” was sung by everyone present.

Godstone Parish Council decided in March they would need separate celebrations for Blindley Heath and Godstone, both funded by public subscription.

Felbridge agreed their programme in April. There would be music and sports followed by a folk dancing display. 140 children, with the old age pensioners, would have tea. The entertainment would go on until 10.00pm and then a dance until midnight. Subscriptions would be invited towards a permanent memorial. They actually carried out their plans almost to the letter.

Tandridge Parish Council recorded that one penny on the rates would raise £29 towards their party.

Lingfield produced a programme of events and laid on a celebration tea at the Council School at 4.30pm. It actually took place on the village hall lawn at 4.00pm.

At 10.00am all the school children gathered on the recreation ground together with members of various village organisations. Many older men proudly wore their WW1 medals. Everyone marched behind the silver band to the Church where there was a special service. The band then marched to their band room playing as they went.

Mr Potts of Newhache, Dormansland, wrote in Community News in 1977 of his day in the Coldstream Guards at Wellington Barracks, London. The Guards lined the route up Constitutional Hill for the Royal procession to St Paul’s Cathedral. They moved to the Mall for the return journey.

Lingfield Park held their United Hunts meeting on Jubilee Day with 300 guineas for the winner of the Silver Jubilee handicap steeplechase - there were 40 entries. The band of the Welsh Guards played throughout the afternoon following their duties earlier in London.

George VI

The second son of George V became King on the abdication of his brother Edward and was crowned on May 12th 1937.

The Church magazine discloses there was a United Service for Children at 9.30am on the day. It had been hoped to have the Coronation service broadcast in the Church but the absence of electric light would make the process too difficult and expensive.

As had become the norm, celebrations included sports events, teas and commemorative mugs and beakers for the children. The Lingfield fireworks and bonfire were managed by the Lingfield Bonfire Society and held in the Football ground.

Baldwin's Hill held special church services on 9th May and had a full day of events on the actual day, including a fancy dress competition and dancing displays by senior scholars plus Coronation Souvenirs.

Elizabeth II

Coronation committees were elected at public meetings in Baldwins Hill, Blindley Heath, Crowhurst, Dormansland and Lingfield in October 1952. Each village immediately started an Appeal for voluntary subscriptions, and collection boxes were placed in Public houses and shops. Jumble sales, dances, house-to-house collections and a sweepstake on the Grand National supplemented the meagre grant from cash-strapped Parish Councils. Post-war austerity was still being felt at every level. Rationing of several commodities did not come to an end until July 1954.

The Pageant that never was: In Dormansland Mr Ellis Groome offered to write a Pageant based on the "Queens of England from the first Elizabeth to our own". BBC Television Dept had shown interest "if it was a genuine Village Pageant."

A cast of 60 adults, as many children as possible, and several horses was required. The play was to be performed in mime to a recording of carefully selected local voices. Dormansland village was to amalgamate with Lingfield and the Pageant would be performed on the Saturday after the Coronation. Lingfield generously offered the use of the Racecourse but in line with BBC interest Dormansland Committee decided to keep the Pageant "in the village, by the village", and staged in the Recreation Field. Costumes were to be hired for the principals. The Hon. Mrs Spender Clay (President of the Committee) said she "would supply what she could from her own possessions" and the W.I. would supply clothing for the extras. But at their March 1953 meeting the Chairman (Mr Duncan Anderson) expressed grave doubts of the Committee's financial capacity to carry out the Pageant (Ellis Groome was not present). "Members reluctantly concluded there was neither time nor money to produce a show worthy of the occasion. Members regretted the time and trouble spent by Mr Ellis Groome and he was tendered a grateful vote of thanks for all he had done". After 5 months planning, writing, auditioning and rehearsing Mr Ellis Groome resigned from the Coronation Committee. Ironically Dormansland had surplus funds when the celebrations were over; the funds were disbursed to local clubs, the school and Hochee Almshouses received a new gate.

All the villages were decorated with bunting and flags, and competitions held to find the best decorated house, and the most attractive business premises. Lingfield Pond was illuminated with red, white and blue lights for one week, at a cost of £54. 9s. 5d.

June 2nd 1953, Coronation Day, dawned wet and cold. At 8.45am the uniformed societies paraded to the village Churches for special services. Dormansland and Lingfield Bands were on duty for most of the day.

Everything paused at 11.15am for the actual Coronation Procession on television or radio broadcast. The proceedings lasted almost three hours. Lingfield P.C. hired two television sets for some unknown lucky viewers.

Children had parties at School, tea parties in the streets, and sports in the Recreation grounds. Their parents had evening dances. The elderly were treated to lunch or tea and a small present.

Betty Sargent remembered “Long trestle tables were erected in the school for the children’s tea party...We all got our mugs...our family and neighbours crowded into one of the pre-fabs to see the coronation on a 9-inch black and white set. We had to draw the curtains to cut out the light from outside.”

Two weeks later Lingfield children went to Bognor Regis for the day. Dormansland children were treated to a cinema outing at East Grinstead to see the film ‘A Queen is Crowned’.

Queen Elizabeth II’s Jubilees

Lingfield’s Silver Jubilee Celebrations went on for six weeks. A Jubilee Craft Exhibition began the programme of events, at the end of April. Visitors could try their skill on a potter’s wheel, lace making, glass engraving and cake icing.

A Poetry Competition and Children’s Painting Competition took place at Lingfield Centre in May. One of the Poems had a comic twist:

The Queen has been reigning for twenty five years
My giddy aunt, it must bore her to tears.
Twenty five years is a long long time,
And that’s more than I can say for my little rhyme.
It’s my Mum and Dad’s Jubilee
So join in their festivity.

Luke Dyers (aged 12)

WHERE ARE YOU NOW - LUKE DYERS? WE NEED A SECOND & THIRD VERSE!

Dormansland Primary School held a Jubilee Sports and Tea on 1st June. All the children received presentation mugs and silver Crowns, given by the School P.T.A. All the elderly folk in the village were invited to the school for a special tea party. The School sent a telegram of loyal greeting to H. M The Queen and received a reply of thanks from Her Majesty.

The ambitious historical Pageant, ‘The Making of Lingfield’ was performed at Lingfield Parish Church on 3 evenings from 31st May to June 2nd. The script was written by a local writer and a cast of 50 acted the history of the area from the time of King Alfred to 1977. Memories of the Pageant are treasured by all who saw or took part in the event. For three days the Old Town witnessed Medieval and Tudor Kings and Queens, Bishops, Squires and wenches walking between Church House and the Church.

Jubilee Day was Tuesday 7th June. Just as on her Coronation Day, the rain fell on the Queen for her Silver Jubilee celebrations, as it did on everyone else.

Lingfield Parish organised a big programme of celebrations. The day started at 2pm with a grand procession from Mount Pleasant Road to the Racecourse where stalls, a model railway, and fenced off areas behind the Grandstand were ready for the gymkhana and riding display, kite flying, Punch & Judy, dancing display, adventure assault course and sports field. Then, true to form, the rains came but as reported in the East Grinstead Courier “Even a thunderstorm failed to stop the celebrations”.

Prizes were given for the best float, the best dressed walker, best dressed bicycle, pram and push-chair. Huge crowds filled the racecourse; most people were in fancy dress. The fun afternoon ended with the National Anthem. Then followed a Barbecue and Barn Dance

The Golden Jubilee in 2002 saw Dormansland Village take centre stage with a free to all Jubilee Concert in the Recreation Ground at 7pm (“bring your own picnic”). Lingfield Silver Band started the entertainment; then a Rag-A-Jazz group played 20s & 30s dance music, the audience was encouraged to dance on the field, and they did, wine glasses in hand. Several talented local soloists sang a mixed programme of music from pop to classics and the evening ended with a grand finale from ‘The Last Night of the Proms’ with soloist Daphne Fairbrass dressed as Britannia, with trident and helmet, and a long flowing red, white and blue cloak. Lingfield Silver Band and Daphne finished with the National Anthem, the audience of hundreds joined in. It is said the chorus could be heard a couple of miles away.

The Lingfield Village Picnic Group organised a packed programme of entertainment over four hours in the Beacon Field, Vicarage Road including a Kings & Queens Fancy Dress Competition, Tug of War competition, display by the Jenny Elsdon Theatre Dance Company, Judo & Self defence demonstrations by the Warlingham Judo Club and a Junior Marching Band from Redhill with a Corps of Drums.

Diamond Jubilee, 4th & 5th June 2012

Lingfield & Dormansland will take part in the chain of more than 4,000 beacons across the country. Local beacons will be lit at approx. 10.15pm (the time when all Local Authorities throughout the land will light their beacons). H.M. The Queen will light the National Beacon in Central London at 10.30pm. The tradition of Beacons goes back to medieval times when at the Beacon signal armies were mustered to defend the country from enemy invasion.

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Sources:

Surrey Mirror
East Grinstead Observer
Lingfield Parish Magazine
Baldwin’s Hill Parish Magazine
Archives of the Hayward Memorial Local History centre
Lingfield and Dormansland Parish Council Minutes and Records