
THE PLATINUM JUBILEE

Remembering Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation 2nd June 1953



SHIPLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

Front cover: Oak and chestnut trees, Church Close Shipley

Planted to celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953

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Introduction

As Shipley History Society's contribution to village commemorations of the Queen's 70 years on the throne we asked our history group members who were either children or young adults in 1952 and 1953 to recall what they remembered of the historic events they witnessed.

Responses have been as varied as they are interesting. Those who were at school were called to an assembly where the head teacher announced the death of King George VI on 6th February 1952. When the national anthem was sung some children were confused as to whether they should sing God save the King or Queen.

News in 1952 was either read in the newspapers, heard on the BBC or by word of mouth. Very few people had telephones in their home. The public announcement of the King's death on BBC Radio was delayed until 11am to allow Princess Elizabeth, who was in Kenya, to be told before anyone else. All programmes on the BBC were subsequently cancelled and replaced by solemn music.

Three young people from Shipley had quite different experiences. Bob Phillips was a trainee market gardener at Knepp where, as far as he can remember, work continued as normal on the day of the King's death. Bob was a Scout and was chosen as one of the Sussex Scouts to line the route of the Coronation procession on 2nd June 1953. Sue Horner travelled to London with a friend and queued for hours at Millbank to pay respects to the late King as he lay in state in Westminster Hall. Angela Ellis, who lived at Pondtail Farm and was a PA to a bloodstock agent, was dismayed that all horse racing was suspended for a period.

The Review of the Fleet at Spithead was one of the best recalled memories of those who lived on the south coast. On 15th June 1953 Queen Elizabeth II boarded HMS Surprise in Portsmouth Harbour and sailed up and down the lines of over 300 ships anchored at Spithead. After dark the fleet was lit up and a firework display followed.

May Hood, Georgina Morrieson, Budda Board and Angela Ellis remember the Queen, The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret visiting Shipley Church in October 1952 for the wedding of Patricia Buller. Patricia's father, Admiral Buller, was flag officer Royal Yachts in George V's time. Peter Ashmore, equerry to the Queen, was the groom. This was a big event in Shipley, and if you look closely you will see in the photograph of the bench inauguration there is an inscription "Her Majesty attended this Church October 18th, 1952". See accounts and a video of this in Chapter 4.

It is estimated that 25% of families had a television at this time, all of which were black and white and very small. Colour film of the Coronation was rushed to cinemas around the country within about three days, giving the public an opportunity to see the solemn ceremony inside Westminster Abbey and the spectacular pageantry on the streets of London.

The Reverend Harry Woodford was the Vicar of St Mary's Church and at Shipley School Mrs Margaret Kent was Head Teacher. During 1952 – 53 thirty three children joined Shipley School, including three children from the newly built Church Close and Brian Wright, son of Les pictured in the photograph of the Coronation bench in Chapter 2. Musical concerts were initiated by Mrs Kent with pieces including Bach and Schubert and a percussion band was formed. It seems likely that the children would have given performances in Shipley to celebrate the Coronation of our young Queen.

Shipleigh celebrates the Coronation in 1953



Inauguration of a bench on the green in Church Close

Back row L to R – Ebenezer Fellowes, (dark suit), Les Wright, John Ingram, Joseph Sautter, Bob Head, Ernest Powell, Sandy Lees, Thomas Limbrick, Sam Doxat.

Front row L to R – Bill Phillips (light jacket), Mrs Georgina Woodford, Rev. Harry Woodford, Mrs Coleman, Michael Laker, Miss Tofts, Miss Kate Blake.

Dramatis Personae (with thanks to Bob Phillips)

Les Wright – Shipleigh Scout Master (always known as Adj), 2nd gardener at Knepp.

John Ingram - manager of the builders yard at Knepp.

Joseph Sautter – co owner of Coolham Bakery and Village Stores, father of Jose Phillips.

Bob Head – head herdsman for Sir Merrick Burrell, member of church choir.

Ernest Powell – the last full time miller of Shipleigh Mill. He used a horse and cart to transport the grain. When he retired Hilaire Belloc refused to have lorries going past Kings Land so milling ended.

Sandy Lees – farmed at Jendens and started the Shipleigh Scout movement in 1934.

Thomas Limbrick – Estate Manager at Knepp and an excellent farmer.

Sam Doxat – lived at Patmans Farm and ran the Young Farmers movement. He was the donor of the pavilion at Coolham Playing Field.

Ebenezer Fellowes – uncle to Jose Phillips and assistant at Coolham Stores.

Bill Phillips – member of Shipleigh Parochial Church Council and choir member. Brother of Bob Phillips, remembered for his fine tenor voice.

Mrs Georgina Woodford – wife of the Rev. Woodford.

The Reverend Harry Woodford – Vicar of Shipley from 1948 – 1963.

Mrs Coleman – a Welsh parishioner and church organist. (Not to be confused with the person of the same name who ran the stores and Post Office at Church Gate Cottages).

Michael Laker – 2nd groom at Knepp and frequently helped in the Knepp nursery.

Miss Tofts – Head teacher at Coolham School.

Miss Kate Blake – Clerk to the Parish Council and choir member.

Bob Phillips contributed this photograph which shows his brother Bill in the front row. The bench was financed with funds raised by the Parish Council for the Coronation festivities and was later placed in Shipley Churchyard. Bob recalls that the oak tree on the green in Church Close, planted at the same time as a permanent reminder of the Coronation, is something Her Majesty would appreciate today with her *Green Canopy* initiative.

Contemporary Parish Council minutes in the next chapter reveal that the sweet chestnut near the oak was planted later in 1953, financed with money left over from the Coronation Festivities Fund, and plaques were made to mark the trees. The bench and plaques have long since gone but the oak and chestnut trees have grown to splendid maturity, as the front cover shows. The Parish Council minutes also tell of the other ways in which Shipley celebrated this historic occasion.



Shipley Football Team, Cup Final at Queen Street, Horsham 1953

Standing L to R – P May, Bob Phillips, Brian Dance, Peter Dance, Les Linscer, George Blake (Goalkeeper), Jackie Wilson

Seated L to R – Gerald Eames, Tom Phillips, Charlie Summerfield, Richardson, Richardson (brothers)

Again, we have Bob Phillips to thank for this photograph. Bob remembers with great affection playing football for Shipley Football Club. In 1953 he played in the Cup Final at Horsham with his brother Tom, but he can't remember if Shipley won!

Shingley Parish Council Minute Books 1952/53

Festivities organised to celebrate this historic occasion

The minutes of Shingley Parish Council give us an insight into life in Shingley in the early 1950s. By the Annual Parish Meeting on 20th March 1951 there was controversy about the Shingley Housing Estate which was only partially completed. The first nine houses had been built in what we now know as Church Close. The remaining eight hadn't been started and there was clearly some opposition to completing the project. At this meeting the Rev. Woodford asked the Parish Council to "request the appropriate authority to approve the erection of the remainder of the houses scheduled for the Shingley Housing Estate on an alternative site in the parish."

The reply was that as the site had been chosen by Town and Country Planning, and the installation of the road and sewage had already cost £5,200, it was thought unlikely that any alteration would be acceptable to the Ministry of Health. The original plan had been for seventeen dwellings; if fewer were built the costs already incurred would fall on existing tenants and ratepayers. The motion was rejected by seven votes to two.

This gives us a picture of how Church Close looked in 1951. The houses opposite the green had been built but those along the east end of the Close had not. Throughout the next two years various issues were raised. One was a request that a footpath, known as the Causeway, originally running between the Andrew Hall and the Churchyard, thought to be of Roman origin, be investigated to ascertain its historical provenance. Enquiries failed to find any authentic information and consequently it was recorded that there is "no proof that the Causeway is of any antiquity" and permission given to remove the flagstones and transfer them to the Churchyard. The road and footpath were accordingly scheduled to be completed by early summer 1953. Requests for street lighting and a road sign showing "No through road" were refused. As we'll see, Church Close went on to play a significant part in the Coronation festivities in June 1953.

A meeting of the Parish Council was convened in December 1952 to discuss ideas of how Shingley should celebrate the Coronation. Mr Rhineland was the Chairman and there were about 20 parishioners present.

It was decided to open festivities with an open air service followed by a tea for children up to sixteen and parishioners over sixty. Anyone unable to travel would be sent a parcel. Souvenir Coronation mugs would be presented to children up to the age of sixteen and to any children born in the parish in 1953. There would be a fancy dress parade, a comic football match, sporting activities, a bonfire and a pageant if it could be arranged. Expenses would be met by a house-to-house collection and 2d charge on the rate.

The Coronation Festivities Committee was formed to plan the festivities and in February 1953 it reported that in addition to the suggestions made in December 1952, a seat had been commissioned to commemorate the visit of Queen Elizabeth in October 1952 to Shingley Church, and a tree planted on the green at Church Close. The suggestion of a pageant appears to have been dropped and no further mention is made of the comic football match.

We know from the contemporary account by Bob Phillips that initially the commemorative bench stood beside the oak tree planted in Church Close. Minutes show that the Churchyard had originally been the intended site for the bench, but it remained in Church Close until March 1954 when at the Annual Parish Meeting it was decided that it should be placed in the Churchyard. In December 1953 the Shipley Coronation Festivities Committee handed over responsibility for the seat and trees at Shipley, the seat at Coolham and the balance of the Coronation Festivities Fund of £5.2.10d. to the Parish Council. Part of this balance was subsequently used to plant a chestnut tree near the oak tree and to provide tree guards and labels for both trees. In October 1954 the grand residue of 5 shillings and 10 pence was handed to the Parochial Church Council towards the upkeep of the Coronation bench, now in the Churchyard. Unfortunately the tree labels have not survived.

The Parish Council minutes don't record when the bench was inaugurated but they do tell us that the oak tree was planted on Coronation Day. It seems likely that the inauguration of the bench with the Reverend Woodford and Shipley parishioners also took place at this time.

Seventy years later the oak and chestnut trees are fine mature specimens, but the bench has long since gone. Our current Parish Council have commissioned a commemorative metal bench which will be inaugurated as part of the Shipley Platinum Jubilee celebrations on the anniversary of the Coronation on Thursday 2nd June 2022. When the Parish Council heard about the original bench, they organised the making of a plaque telling the story of the original bench and tree, and with a fitting link to the past, it will be unveiled by Bob Phillips, Freeman of this Parish and brother of Bill, who stands proudly in the 1953 photograph. Another link to the past is Brian Wright, a bell ringer at Shipley Church, son of Les Wright in the original photograph, who will also be present to witness the ceremony, just as his father had been 70 years earlier.

Memories of Shipley residents and History Society members

Stella Bianco remembers: I was attending primary school in Portslade by Sea and my class was standing in a cold corridor waiting for the next lesson in the big hall. It was called "Music and Movement" broadcast on the radio. However, it seemed we were kept waiting for ages and ages before we heard that the King had died. I think the lesson went ahead and we were not sent home.

My parents did not own a television, but someone in our road did and we saw a brief bit of the ceremony on a very small freestanding TV with a minute screen. I was taken to see the film shortly afterwards.

My mother planted a trough of red (salvias), white (sweet alyssum) and blue (lobelia) plants in our front porch. She made me a dress with puffed sleeves of pale blue material with the royal procession printed around the hemline. I wore it to the children's party in Easthill Park, where we were all given a nice blue glass coronation tumbler, which I kept until 2004. You can buy one today on eBay for about £6-10!

Ursula Marriage remembers: I was 12 years old and at school when I heard the news. We were all called into the Hall and the Headmistress gave us the news of the King's death. A gasp went up and someone cried. The senior music teacher then sat at the grand piano and played the National Anthem which caused some confusion as we had always sung God Save the King and it seemed really strange to sing God Save the Queen. We were then dismissed and sent back to the classrooms to continue lessons.

I also remember that the usual programmes on the radio (or 'wireless' as it was then) were cancelled and doleful music was played.

Elizabeth Day remembers: My husband Mick was 6 months old when the Coronation took place! He's sure he must have had a set of crockery but doesn't know what happened to it. I was born in November 1951 and always thought of myself as an Elizabethan until I was given a mounted 1951 sixpence by the family for my birthday last year. It had GR on it so I have realised I'm a Georgian! Obviously, I was too young to remember the death of the King or even the Coronation but have photos of it. Like many places Underwood Rd, had a street party. The cottages front doors opened onto the pavement. My Gran lived in 27 and you stepped down into her hall. I was born opposite in no 38 and there were 6 steps up to our front door. Neither property, which were rented, had a bathroom and we had an outside loo. I have photos of me sat up to a large table running up the middle of the road but really can't remember it at all. There were no problems with cars as the only person to have a car in the village was the Doctor! I do still have my mug and plate though the bowl was broken about 15 years ago when I dropped it dusting. The perils of housework and having tiled floors; it might have survived hitting a carpet.

Jean Wright remembers: I can clearly remember arriving at the school gate and being sent home again by the headmistress as the King had died. I can't remember being upset or if we had the following day off. Our mother was in hospital, and I was more concerned about her than the remote figure of the King. Mum always talked about the sombre music on the hospital radio which did nothing to cheer her up!

On Coronation Day my sister and I were recovering from mumps. Mum had made us red, white and blue cardigans which we wore all day as we listened to the radio, although I can't believe I sat there very attentively. The film came out within about three days, and we were taken to the cinema to watch it. Later, in geography lessons at school, we followed the Queen's tour around the Commonwealth by pinning out her route in red ribbon on a world map. I was very proud of all the red on the map, something that makes me feel rather uncomfortable now.

We were a Naval family and consequently very interested in the Review of the Fleet at Spithead later in June. We went out to Southsea by bus in the evening and saw the fleet lit up, followed by fireworks. This was very exciting, but my main memory is queueing for a bus home in the dark at Clarence Pier where it seemed all of Portsmouth had turned up. In the 50s Portsmouth still had trolley buses, some of which were decorated



each summer. This shows the Coronation year bus. (Photo from the book *Portsmouth Transport* by Ron Brown).

Chris Allen remembers: In 1952 I was living either at East Lavington Stud Farm near Petworth or else Molecomb Stud Farm Goodwood. I remember being carried on my father's shoulders at a big gathering at Goodwood racecourse on Coronation Day in 1953 and going to a neighbouring house to see the Coronation on the television. The stables for the racehorses and the workers' houses were built all around the courtyard of the stud. I think Molecomb is now an equestrian centre.

Jackie Scott remembers:

*In 1952 I was only just one plus two times two
But in 1953 I had reached the dizzy heights of two times three
My memories then are of bunting everywhere that day
Strung all around Dormansland where we then did stay
Now, with my precious EIRR pencils and mug in hand
Here's to celebrating our Queen's 70th Anniversary across the land.*



Sue Horner (néé Hickman) remembers: I can remember queuing along Millbank and then going into Westminster Hall and seeing the soldiers and the Guards of Honour standing around the plinth at the Lying in State - the coffin covered with the flag. I didn't go with my mother and father, I went with a school friend and her mother, and we queued for a very long time.

[Editor's note - this would have been between 11-14 February 1952 when King George VI's coffin was brought to London from Sandringham. It was then taken on 15 February to St George's Chapel Windsor for the Funeral and Interment. 304,000 people passed through Westminster Hall, with queues up to 4 miles long forming. At the end of the three days, jewellers were called in to clean off the dust from the Crown Jewels which lay on his coffin.]

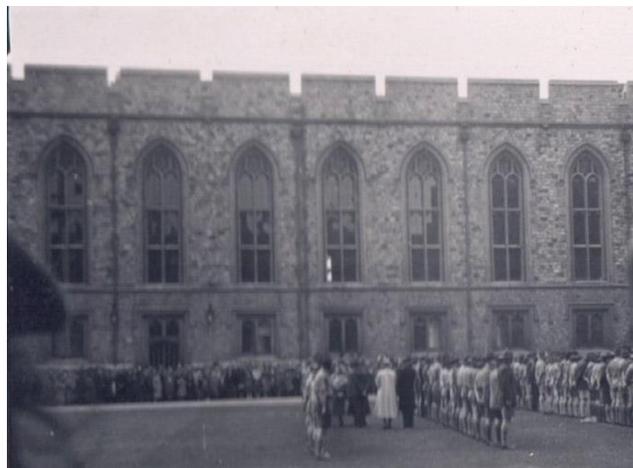
Then I remember being in London for the Coronation, going up to Piccadilly and sitting on the benches. We had seats, which were quite difficult to get, on the way down towards St James's Palace. We had seats on the side of the road, quite near to Trafalgar Square and the procession came down through there. There were crowds of people, but not as many as you get now. I don't remember being given anything to wave, but the atmosphere was very good.

Bob Phillips remembers: I don't recall much about the death of King George VI on 6th February 1952. I was training to be a market gardener at Knepp Estate under the guidance of Mr Shinfield, who was one of the best gardeners in England. Work carried on as normal, and my memories are primarily about the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953.

I was 17 years old and was chosen as one of 20 Scouts from West Sussex to represent the Scout Movement lining the route of the Coronation procession in London. We all travelled by train to Victoria on 1st June 1953 where we were marched over Vauxhall Bridge to the Royal Horticultural Hall. It was a very big hall with all the floors chalked out with the names of our troops. All of the counties were represented and after we all found our places we were given a meal. A tipper lorry arrived and we all piled in – no health and safety rules then - and we were taken on a tour of the Coronation route. Many other organisations were doing the same, so it was very crowded. There was bunting and Union Jacks everywhere. We got back to the hall at around 11 pm and settled down to sleep on a very hard floor.

We left the Royal Horticultural Hall at 6 am on the morning of June 2nd, again by tipper lorry and in the pouring rain. We were in place outside Buckingham Palace on the left hand side looking up the Mall from the Victoria Memorial and we cheered at everything that went past! The procession passed right past us, and it was all very exciting. We stayed in place until the procession returned after the ceremony at the Abbey, but this time the coach went round the other side of the memorial, so we didn't get a close up. I think we were given a packed lunch to sustain us, but I don't remember much about this.

Later on, probably in 1954, I was one of the first Scouts to become a Queen's Scout as of course previously Scouts reaching this goal would have been King's Scouts. We went to Windsor Castle for the parade and presentation which was performed by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, as Queen Elizabeth was in Australia on her world tour of the Commonwealth. The presentation took place in St George's Chapel.



In Shipley one of the ways we marked the Coronation was the presentation of an inscribed seat which was set up on the green in Church Close. The seat no longer exists, but the oak tree standing there today was planted where the bench stood in this photograph. I don't remember what other celebrations would have taken place, but Jose remembers her father and uncle, who owned Goods Stores in Coolham, provided the bread and rolls for a street party. Jose's family moved to Coolham in 1951. My mother Irene would have played the piano for any concerts and Bill, my brother would have sung, as he had a wonderful tenor voice."

May Hood (née Merrick) remembers: My main memory of 1952 was the visit by The Queen, Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother to Shipley Church in October 1952 for the wedding of Patricia Buller to Peter Ashmore, equerry to the Queen. I watched from the window above the Post Office and Stores at Church Gate and had a perfect view. This clip from Pathe News shows me sitting on the windowsill. I was with Lil Coleman and Alice Coleman, my Mum's cousins.

I think all of Shipley must have been there! This was before the Coronation in 1953. I don't remember much about the Coronation celebrations in Shipley although there was a function at Knepp Castle. I was a single 23 year old working for the Civil Service in Midhurst so I didn't have a lot of time to spend in Shipley during weekdays. Travelling to work took a long time as I rode my bike to Billingshurst, took the train to Pulborough, changed to a steam train that took me to Midhurst and then had a half hour walk to the office. I do remember the vicar, Harry Woodford, as he officiated at my wedding in 1958 in Shipley Church. I don't recall a lot of bunting decorating Red Lane, but then there were very few houses here in 1953. Kings Platt wasn't built and I'm not sure if Church Close had been started or not. The only buildings would have been my home, The Oaks, Corner Cottages, Causeway Cottages, Church Gate Cottages and the Andrew Hall.

[Editor's note: the first nine houses on the north side of Church Close had been completed by the end of 1951 but the road hadn't been laid. The eight houses along the east, part of the original plan for 17 houses, were built after this].



Video of the event - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Z8hXB1J0pw>

Ray Wright remembers: News of the King's death was delivered by the head teacher (Mr Rundle) to each class in turn. He didn't make a long speech but did mention that the country now had a Queen on the throne and that she would be expected to abandon the royal tour and return home. I was a pupil at Leesland Primary School in Gosport at the time. My father Ernest and my eldest son Geoff attended the same school. I was in the 5th Gosport Wolf Cubs at the time, and we were all instructed to wear black arm bands with our uniform. My mother Ellen made one for me. We were required to wear them for twelve weeks. This applied to not only all members of the armed forces and civil services but uniformed youth organisations. I understand that such rigid rules are no longer insisted on today and court mourning is for a shorter period and only applies to the Royal Household and members of the armed services involved in the ceremonial.

Interestingly I was serving in Brunei in 1987 when the Sultan's father died (He had been Sultan himself but had abdicated in favour of his son when he considered himself too old for the job). Mourning was strictly observed. In uniform we were ordered to wrap a white band around our soncots (a form of Islamic head gear).

When it came to the Coronation in 1953 there was great excitement. Many families bought their first television sets. In my family there were arguments about whether to purchase one. In the event we didn't have one for the Coronation itself but sat around the radio to listen to the ceremony. The newspapers had special editions, so we were able to follow both the ceremony and the procession route as it happened. Many houses were decorated with flags and large crowns. My father worked at the Royal Naval Armament Depot. He did the painting on a large ceremonial arch over the main gate at RNAD Frater. He and I rode our bikes to Frater main gate when the arch was inaugurated. There was a photographer with a large bellows camera to take pictures of the archway and the men who had built it. The photographer allowed me to put my head under a piece of material draped at the back of the camera and press the shutter. Many years later, on a visit to the "Explosion" Museum at Priddy's Hard I saw a copy of the photograph on display.

After the Coronation came the fleet review at Spithead. The day before the review Dad took us into the armament depot where we boarded a small ammunition ship. I remember being quite excited as we steamed out of Portsmouth harbour and went up and down the lines of ships. On the day of the review the whole family including my uncle and aunt went out to Stokes Bay to see the fireworks and fleet illuminations. My uncle's family were visiting from Coventry especially for the occasion. My uncle's younger brother was recovering from a broken leg, so Dad and my uncle took turns to carry him. The link below is to the Pathe News reel, but you need to skip the ads.

<https://youtu.be/F2SNJ627-ps?t=11>

A few days later the Mayor of Gosport came to the school to present us with souvenir Coronation cups and saucers. I still have mine. We were also given sixpence (old money) from the Government. But we were not allowed to spend it



ourselves, so the teacher collected all the sixpences (called a tanner in slang). It was decided by the school that the money would be spent on a visit to the cinema to watch the film of the coronation. The cost of a cinema ticket was 9 old pennies, so we were told to bring 3 old pennies to school to put with our sixpences. This was a problem for some children and their parents. I don't know how the issue was resolved but I suspect the school found a solution because everyone went to the cinema.

Gordon Lindsay remembers: In 1953 I lived in a small village 9 miles west of Dumfries called Kirkgunzeon which had a population of around 500. The parish was roughly the same size as Shipley and most inhabitants worked on local farms and the railway.

Very, very few people had TV and we celebrated the Coronation in a field by having, essentially, a village party in a field. All children also received a Coronation mug which had a picture of the Queen on it. Unfortunately, I've lost mine, but I'm pretty sure it looked like this:



Paddy Hunter remembers: At the time of the Coronation my parents were farming in Walberton (nr Barnham and Yapton). On Coronation Day I walked through the village with my mother, and we spent a pleasant afternoon at the village fete.

In the evening my father went to "The Holly Tree" public house for a celebratory drink. My mother and I went on a coach ride which took us around Slindon Park and surrounding areas where beacons were lit to celebrate the occasion.

Kate Rowbottom remembers: I was eleven when George VI died and I remember it well. I was at school and the teacher was very sombre. She told us she had some very sad news for us and that the King had died. Frankly this didn't mean very much to me, and I don't think it did either to my classmates, but because I felt it was expected of us, I remember putting my head down on my desk and pretending to cry.

The Coronation was very different. We talked about it with excitement at school and my father went out and bought our first television especially for the occasion. The screen was very small, set in an enormous wood surround, and of course it was only black and white.

However, I think we were the only family in the road to have a television and I remember our front room being full to bursting with neighbours on the great day.

Shortly afterwards I saw a book advertised in the daily paper. It was specifically on the Coronation and full of beautiful (or for those days) photographs taken on the day. I desperately wanted this book and, I am ashamed to say, pestered my parents to death about buying it for me. (We only had presents on birthdays and Christmas in those days). I must have really been a pain, for a friend of my parents bought it for me and I still have it to this day. Unfortunately, compared with the photography of today, the pictures are pretty horrendous, but I still treasure that book.

Erica Smale remembers: At the time of the coronation my father was MD of a travel firm called Poly Tours. He arranged that a group of Americans should occupy stands above what was then Pemberthys at Oxford Circus. This was directly on the route of the returning procession. Mother and I also attended. Americans, being as they are about children, I was duly ushered to the front row. We were in an elevated position so not only did we have an excellent view of all the military bands but were on a level with the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh as they passed.

My father had arranged for a large screen to show all the proceedings of the ceremony, so we had the best of both worlds. On our return we visited a neighbour who owned a television set - not a usual acquisition in those days - so we were able to watch the evening celebrations, too. But that was nothing like as exciting as seeing the procession first hand. I remember the noise, the bands playing, the soldiers marching, the excitement and the cheering of the crowds contrasted quite movingly with the solemnity and dignity of the Coronation service.

Georgina Oliver (née Morrieson) remembers: I was living at Lackenhurst in 1952. My mother was very upset when she heard about the death of King George VI in February 1952. I don't know how my father reacted as he was an Army officer and away from home. There had been concern at home for some time about the health of the King, and it seemed to me, a small child, a natural progression so it didn't feel like a surprise. I don't remember feeling particularly upset. My main memory of 1952 was the very exciting visit of the Queen, Queen Mother and Princess Margaret to Shipley for the wedding of Patricia Buller. I went to the church with my school and there was absolutely nowhere to sit, so we put our raincoats over a thorn bush in the churchyard and sat there. We had a perfect view and what has remained in my memory is how thrilled we were to be so close and able to see the beautiful complexions of the Royal ladies. My parents were invited to Netherwood afterwards.

The Coronation was thrilling. We spent the day with the Covells who had bought a television especially for the great event. I was so excited as it was the first time I'd seen a television. Despite it being very small and in black and white I enjoyed watching the spectacle unfold. I remember sitting on the floor with the Covell children and eating ham sandwiches!

Angela Ellis (née Covell) remembers: in 1952 I was working as a PA to a bloodstock agent and someone came into the office to tell us that the King had died. This was a terrible shock as he wasn't very old and I hadn't been aware he had been in poor health. We all went into mourning; race meetings were cancelled and the radio played nothing but mournful music for about a fortnight as far as I can remember. I was very disappointed at the cancellation of race meetings as this was a major part of my life and work.

In October 1952 the Queen, Queen Mother and Princess Margaret were in half mourning when they came to Shipley for wedding of my friend, Patricia Buller. I always felt sorry for Patricia as all the attention that day was on the Royal party and not the bride. I was invited to the wedding and afterwards the reception was held at Netherwood.

On Coronation Day I was at home at Pondtail Farm with my parents, younger sisters and brother, although he was very young and may not have taken so much interest. Friends joined us around the television as we watched the whole procession and ceremony. Televisions were a rarity at the time so we were very lucky to have one. Soon afterwards I went to see the colour film of the occasion at the cinema, and this was much better than on the small black and white television.

Priscilla (Budda) Board (née Covell) remembers: I was 15 and at school when I heard the news of the King's death. The teacher burst in and made the announcement in rather a dramatic fashion and we all cried. I don't remember much about the Coronation except watching the ceremony on our television with friends and family. I was living at Pondtail Farm at the time and my father was a tenant farmer on the Knepp Estate. My life in those days revolved around horses, as it did for my two sisters, but not for my brother John or my mother. We always said they kept the balance in the family! I remember the wedding of Patricia Buller in 1952 vividly, and it made a greater impression seeing the Queen, her mother and sister at close range at Shipley Church than seeing the pictures on our very small television. I was so thrilled to see the Queen in person and I'll never forget her beautiful complexion.

Judith Emrich remembers: I was at school in Brighton, (no not Roedean), in the Sixth Form. I was 16 and alternated with the music mistress to play the piano for the morning assembly. We played a hymn and then a 'stirring' march for the school to leave the hall. Usually I played Colonel Bogey or the RAF march, which was more difficult, often with a few mistakes which I hoped no one would notice. On Thursdays the music mistress would play and start with the National Anthem. The day of the announcement of the King's death, which of course was a very sombre moment, was not a Thursday, but God Save the Queen had to be played. There was a sense of panic as no music could be found in the piano stool or in the school hymn book. The morning assembly continued while someone searched the school music library and produced the required sheet of music which I then had to sight read, hopefully not playing too many wrong notes.

Later during the funeral service for the King there was a wonderful playing of the Chopin Funeral March which I had never heard and was quite overwhelmed by the tragic sound. Even today, I am very moved by the beauty of that piece of Chopin.

The Coronation was my first visit to London with friends and without parents. Most exciting. We took the milk train from Brighton which left about 6 am and cost four shillings. All we could afford. Some boys (yes, we had invited boys to our School Dance,) joined us and we were about eight in all. On arriving in London at about 7am we found what was called a 'greasy spoon' cafe in Soho with sticky oil cloth table covers. Feeling very grown up and daring, we ordered some breakfast. Sadly I have no recollection of the menu; we probably tried to get something like toast and marmalade with maybe a cup of tea.

Joining the crowded pavements to try and get a glimpse of the wonderful horses and carriages added to the excitement, so the Coronation of our wonderful Queen Elizabeth will be marked for ever for me as my first real 'grown up' adventure.

5

Coronation Trees

By Pippa Reay

I was surprised to learn recently that a tree had been planted in Shipley village in 1953 to commemorate the Coronation of our Queen. I have lived in the village for 35 years now, am interested in its history and had never heard of this before! There has been no plaque marking it out, as far as I know, since we moved to Shipley.

Of course, the Shipley Coronation Tree is particularly special - how many of the multitude of Coronation trees planted all over the country in 1953 are in a community actually visited by the new Queen (to attend the wedding of friends of the Royal family) between acceding to the throne in 1952 and her Coronation?!

Queen Elizabeth II had been on the throne for a few years by the time I was born but 1952 is also an important year for me and my siblings, as our parents were married that year too!

Although I have no personal connection with the Shipley Coronation Tree, there are two Coronation Trees in other rural counties that my family hold dear for their connection with our dear mother and her mother, during their school days. Of course, earlier coronations were also often marked by the planting of trees, with local school children involved in the ceremonies – a memorable occasion for many of them:

Nan's Coronation Tree in Lydlinch, Dorset

When my sister moved to Dorset, she discovered that our maternal grandmother (Nan) had lived in and attended the school in the nearby village of Lydlinch. I found the entry in the school log advising of her admittance in 1899, aged 4 years. My sister tracked down the old Victorian school, now a house, and noticed a large oak tree standing alone on the neighbouring green. Close by was a stone, once broken but repaired, bearing this inscription:



"This tree was planted by Lady Barbara Yeatman-Biggs, September 12th, 1902, to commemorate the Coronation of King Edward VII".

The school log also records that, at 12 noon, the Lord of the Manor, the Bishop of Southwark, gave a "short but interesting address to the children", before they "marched to the Common, where the Ceremony took place. They then sang 'Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue', 'God Save the King' and 'Here's a Health unto his Majesty'". Nan, at 7 years old, was probably one of those children! Apparently, school was closed the following day and the Rector gave the children a tea. What fun!

In 2013, my brother, two of his children and I visited my sister in Dorset to be shown the school and tree. Since then, we refer to this mighty oak as “Nan’s Tree”:

Mum’s Coronation Tree in Burley, Hampshire

After she left school, Nan moved to Burley in the New Forest, where she married in 1924, raised a family (including Mum), and lived for the rest of her life. My siblings and I spent a lot of time in Burley as we grew up and it is still a special place that we regularly converge on for our wider family gatherings. Imagine our surprise in 2014, when we discovered another Coronation Tree, this time a large, Horse Chestnut tree, leafless at the time, in a privately-owned field at Pigsty Corner! There was a dilapidated wooden fence around it with a brass plaque attached, bearing the legend:

“Planted by the youngest scholar in Burley School [] in November 1937, the year of the Coronation of King George VI”.



Presumably, all the schoolchildren (including Mum, 9 years old that month) were there to see the tree planted. We now refer to this magnificent tree as “Mum’s Tree”. We were lucky to find it when we did, as the fencing and plaque were removed shortly afterwards, the latter for restoration. I returned later to see and photograph the tree in all its spring glory:



Final Musings

I am so pleased that the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee has provided the opportunity for the Shipley Coronation Tree to be identified as such once more. We can all marvel at how much it has grown during the Queen’s reign, a reign long enough that neither we nor our children have attended a Coronation tree planting ceremony in our school days to keep the family tradition going, or otherwise!

I wonder how many families will identify with the Shipley Coronation Tree, now and in the years to come, as my family has done with these other two Coronation Trees?

Also, could there be any villages out there with a “full set” of Coronation Trees?

Pippa Reay, June 2022

Shingley Celebrates 2022

The Platinum Jubilee bench

To commemorate the 70 year reign of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Shingley Parish Council commissioned a metal bench from the Camellia Botnar Foundation, a local organisation that provides training and support to troubled young people.

This splendid bench was inaugurated on the anniversary of the Coronation on 2nd June 2022. Mr Philip Baxter, Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed parishioners to the ceremony, and Councillor Sarah Cuthbertson explained the significance of placing the bench facing down Church Close, the site of the 1953 bench and trees planted on Coronation Day in 1953.

Bob Phillips, a Freeman of Shingley Parish, whose memories and an old photograph prompted the research by Shingley History Society into the 1953 bench, and whose brother Bill and future father-in-law Jo Sautter feature in the photograph, was present to cut the ribbon.

Sarah Cuthbertson, who organised the making of the bench and the ceremony, had arranged for a plaque explaining the origin of the original bench and tree planting to be placed beside the new bench. She accompanies Bob Phillips at the ribbon cutting ceremony.





Bob and Jose Phillips are the first people to sit on the Platinum Jubilee bench



The Reverend Chris Allen said prayers for Her Majesty and blessed the bench made to honour her long years of service to her country and Commonwealth.

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National and local events 1952 - 1953

1952

16 January	Sooty makes first appearance on BC TV.
6 February	King George VI dies at Sandringham House.
14 – 25 February	Winter Olympics in Oslo – UK wins 1 medal.
15 February	Funeral of King George VI at Windsor.
21 February	Abolition of compulsory wartime identity cards.
26 February	Winston Churchill tells the nation we have the atom bomb.
26 March	ShIPLEY Parish Council AGM reports on activities including a request for better bus service, placing of village signs and reporting to the County Council on repairs needed to footpaths and bridleways.
31 March	Alan Turing, heroic wartime code breaker is convicted of “gross indecency”. He elects to have chemical treatment instead of prison sentence.
1 June	One shilling charge introduced for NHS prescriptions.
5 July	Last original London tram goes out of service.
19 July – 3 August	Summer Olympics in Helsinki. UK wins 1 gold, 2 silver, 8 bronze medals.
16 August	34 people die in floods in Lynmouth, Devon. ShIPLEY Parish Council organises a house-to-house collection to send to the relief fund and raises over £30.
6 September	31 people killed at the Farnborough Air Show as a DH110 crashes.
3 October	<i>Operation Hurricane</i> – UK’s first atomic bomb exploded in islands off Western Australia.
5 October	Tea rationing ends.
November	Dwight Eisenhower elected president in USA.
14 November	<i>New Musical Express</i> publishes first UK singles chart.
25 November	Agatha Christie’s <i>Mousetrap</i> begins its run in London.
December	End of the <i>Utility Furniture</i> scheme.
4 – 9 December	London smog estimated to have caused death of 4000 people.
10 December	ShIPLEY Parish Council convenes a meeting to discuss the forthcoming celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II’s Coronation. Monies for the Coronation Festivities Fund would be raised by a house-to-house collection and a charge of 2 pence on the rates.
12 December	<i>The Flower Pot Men</i> debuts on BBC TV.
25 December	Queen Elizabeth II’s first Christmas broadcast on BBC radio.
Undated	ShIPLEY Parish Council organises a house-to-house collection and raises £25.3.11d for the King George VI Memorial.

1953

31 January	North Sea flood kills hundreds of people on the east coast of Britain. ShIPLEY Parish Council organises a house to house collection and raises £52.15.10d for the relief fund.
1 February	Pool petrol, introduced in WW2, is replaced by individual brands.
5 February	Sweet rationing ends.
23 February	ShIPLEY Parish Council receives a notice of intended transfer of the licence for the Blacksmith’s Arms from Peter Williams to Richard Daughtrey. <i>[Now known as The Countryman Inn]</i> .

28 February	James Watson and Francis Crick announce they have discovered the structure of the DNA molecule.
4 March	Tommy Taylor becomes UK's most expensive footballer on his transfer for £29,999 from Barnsley to Manchester United.
24 March	Queen Mary, consort of the late George V dies at Marlborough House.
25 March	<p>Shipleigh Parish Council holds its Annual Meeting at which members stand to remember the passing of Queen Mary. The chairman noted Shipleigh parishioners had contributed over £100 to national disasters and to the King George VI Memorial Fund.</p> <p>Improvements and alterations to the Andrew Hall and Cottage resulted in a deficit of £52.2.5d in the Andrew Charity. £75.0.0d was loaned free of interest for a period not exceeding 2 years. (By the Annual Meeting in 1954 the debt had been repaid).</p> <p>The flagstone footpath between the Andrew Hall and churchyard, called the Causeway, was deemed not to be of any antiquity. The flagstones would be given to the Parish Council when the new footpath and road to Church Close was completed.</p>
April	BBC TV introduces <i>Watch with Mother</i> which runs for 20 years.
13 April	Ian Fleming publishes first James Bond book, <i>Casino Royale</i> .
16 April	Queen launches Royal Yacht Britannia at John Brown Shipyard on the Clyde.
24 April	Winston Churchill is made Knight of the Garter by Queen Elizabeth II.
25 April	James Watson and Francis Crick publish their description of the double helix structure of DNA.
2 May	Blackpool Football Club win the FA Cup Final 4 -3 against Bolton Wanderers. Stanley Matthews was instrumental in winning the game for Blackpool, who had never previously won a major trophy.
20 May	Shipleigh Parish Council Annual Meeting at which the Chairman undertakes to investigate insurance against accidents for the Coronation festivities.
2 June	Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The inauguration of a bench to commemorate the occasion took place on the green at Church Close and an oak tree planted.
2 June	The Times exclusively carries the news of the conquest of Everest by a British expedition. Edmund Hilary and Sherpa Tensing Norgay reached the summit on 29 May. The scoop by James Morris was held back until 2 June.
23 June	Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill suffers a stroke and the public told he was suffering from fatigue.
25 June	John Christie is sentenced to death for the murders of 8 people whose bodies were found at his home, including one for which Timothy Evans was hanged in 1950.
30 June	The first roll-on/roll-off ferry runs between Boulogne and Dover.
20 July	<i>The Good Old Days</i> filmed at the Leeds City Varieties begins its 30 year run on BBC TV.
19 August	The England cricket Team under Len Hutton win the Ashes for the first time in 19 years.
9 September	Shipleigh Parish Council decides to leave the Coronation bench on the green at Church Close for the present and decide a permanent location at the Annual Meeting in 1954.
September	Myxomatosis introduced illegally into England on an estate in West Sussex.
19 September	Hubert Parry's <i>Jerusalem</i> introduced for the first time at the <i>Last Night of the Proms</i> .

26 September	Sugar rationing ends.
27 October	The Arbroath Lifeboat, <i>Robert Lindsay</i> , sinks with all six crew.
November	Britain's first nuclear weapon, <i>Blue Danube</i> , is delivered to RAF Wittering.
2 November	<i>The Samaritans</i> telephone counselling service for the suicidal is started by the Rev. Chad Varah.
11 November	First BBC <i>Panorama</i> programme broadcast.
20 November	The <i>Piltown Man</i> is exposed as a hoax.
25 November	The England V Hungary football match played at Wembley Stadium results in a 6 – 3 defeat for the England National Football team, ending an unbeaten 90 year home run against sides from outside the UK.
26 November	The House of Lords votes in favour of the government proposals for commercial television.
9 December	ShIPLEY Coronation Committee asks the Parish Council to accept responsibility for the seat and trees at Shipley, the seat at Coolham and the balance of the Committee's fund. This was agreed to.
December	Matchbox toy vehicles are introduced by Lesney Products of London.
10 December	Sir Winston Churchill wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
Undated	25% of British households now own a television, many being bought for the Coronation.
	Johnny Dankworth starts up the Johnny Dankworth Orchestra.
	Laura Ashley sells her first printed materials.
24 March 1954	Part of the balance of the Shipley Parish Council Coronation Festivities Fund of £5.2.10d is used to plant a chestnut tree near the oak tree on the green at Church Close.
20 October 1954	The remaining balance of 5 shillings and 10 pence of the Shipley Coronation Festivities Fund after the planting of the chestnut tree, supplying tree guards and labels is handed to Parochial Church Council as a contribution towards maintenance of the Coronation bench, which had been relocated to a permanent position in the Churchyard.

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Researched and collated by Jean Wright on behalf of Shipley History Society. June 2022.

