

HALLOW HISTORY ARCHIVES

The build-up to the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on Wednesday 12th May 1937

and how Worcester and Hallow celebrated in Coronation week



The 1937 Coronation week contained several firsts. It was the first time that a Coronation ceremony has been broadcast on the “wireless”; that George IV, had spoken to Dominions Premiers at Buckingham Palace and Dominion troops had mounted guard there. A newsreel film of the event was flown out on a sponsored flight to South Africa on the 13th May.

Closer to home, Worcester’s Mayor, Lady Atkins had accepted the command to represent Worcester at the Coronation ceremony. Nine WI county members – but none from our villages – were amongst the seat-holders on Consitution Hill. Lady Atkins encouraged Worcester businesses to decorate their premises and Worcester Evening News awarded Coronation Rosettes to the best displays which were listed in the newspaper.

Hallow also awarded prizes for the Best Decorated Houses, which were won by Miss Clay (*The Green*), Mrs H E Harris (*address not known*), Mr E Lawrence (*Parkfield Lane – chauffeur and gardener*) and Miss Atkinson (*SRN SCM - Lea House, The Green*).

Worcester promoted itself during the celebrations as the “City of Beautiful Light”, using floodlighting at night to illuminate public buildings such as St Andrew’s spire. (Was this a first too?) There were festoons of lighting at Cripplegate Park. The lighting which continued for a week, was also be strung along both banks of the river for about a mile. The Eltex Works in St John’s provided the metal fittings for the lights for the profiles of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth that were placed on Paynes Meadow, on the opposite bank of the River Severn to the Cathedral Watergate.

The Worcester Evening News reported that there was also floodlighting at an un-named property in Hallow, which “formed an amazing spectacle. Viewed from three miles away across the river” it stood out “like a fairy castle”. In Worcester the week had started with a Special Service (for Public Bodies) in the Cathedral Sunday May 9. On Tuesday the day before the Coronation, schoolchildren in Worcester had a special tea laid on at their schools, the juniors received a Coronation Mug whilst the Seniors received a copy of the Coronation book.

At Hallow events were arranged differently. On the day of the Coronation after a Church Parade attended by Parish Councillors, members of the British Legion, Foresters branch "Pride of the Heath", staff and pupils from the school and the general public, there was a united service of Thanksgiving. The collection was for the restoration of the church bells. This was followed by planting of a Copper Beech on the Green by Mrs Banks of Hallow Park. The tree was given by Mrs Perry of Henwick House, and planted between the trees which mark the Coronation of King Edward VII, 1902, and the Coronation of King George V in 1911.

One of several versions of the
1937 Coronation mug

One of the many different 1937
Coronation Mugs

The next village celebration on the same day was not directly connected to the Coronation. The vicar, Reverend C M Stickings wrote in the Parish Magazine –

"It was the unveiling of a Plaque at the entrance of the playing Fields, presented by the National Playing Fields' Trust in commemoration of the generous gift by Mr Banks in 1931. Luncheon for the older people and children's teas and adult teas were served in the beautifully decorated Parish Hall, and each child received a Coronation mug supplied by the Committee, and in addition a Coronation sixpence, presented by Mr Banks (*of Hallow Park*) to each child to mark the new reign. Sports were indulged in, and a huge bonfire (*at the top of Holly Bank*) was lighted by Mr J E Wheeler (*Heath Farm*) at

10pm and which continued to burn all through the night until after noon of the next day. Mr Wheeler's Coronation bonfire was determined to have the last word. Mr Cutler's (*Parkmead, Parkfield Lane*) radio amplifier gave listeners the full Coronation Service broadcast from Westminster Abbey, and was much appreciated." (*Mr Cutler was a wireless engineer with his own business*).

The Worcester Evening News also reported that simultaneously with the bonfire being lit there was dancing in the hall to the Al Beechey Band who had played selections throughout the day and that there was a profusion of flags and bunting on the approach to the field and hall.

In Worcester on the day of the Coronation, after a special peal of the Cathedral bells, there was a Drumhead Service on Pitchcroft, and a March-Past by local Youth organisations and at noon a Royal Salute of 21 guns was fired by the 256th Worcester Battery RFA. The Salute synchronising with those being fired throughout the country.

Amongst other highlights on Pitchcroft was a full Variety programme including acrobatic dancer, illusionist, clown, a skating sensation and Speedway, as well as musicians and vocalists which continued until 5.45. then "The Gay Companions" Concert Party. From 8pm until midnight there was dancing on a huge specially constructed dance floor. Music provided by military bands and Band of the College for the Blind. Seats had been placed so that the elderly and infirm would enjoy the various entertainments, and of course buffet refreshments at the Grandstand and in marquees. At 10 pm there was a Grand Illuminated Boat Procession and Fireworks at 11pm. In Worcester the week had started with a special service in the Cathedral Sunday May 9 and it concluded on the Friday with an historic "Beating of the Bounds" around the City.

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