

Coronation Day June 2nd as I saw it by The Secretary

As appended to the Minutes book of the Eynsham Coronation Celebrations Sept 1952 to June 1953 by Ruth Hayward – with text enlarged for ease of reading.

“I wonder when we shall all meet again. Or if we shall & if in the years to come the youngsters of Eynsham will remember that day June 2ⁿ^d 1953 & say 'We did have a good time you know' & whether they too will form a committee which will give them as much pleasure as being Secretary of Eynsham Coronation Celebrations from Sept 3^r^d 1952 to June 28th 1953 has given me — I sincerely hope so.”

Coronation Day dawned cloudy but still with some sunshine, which, after the heavy rainfall of the evening before, seemed to cheer us all, but alas, as we entered the Square for the Religious Service at 9.30 the clouds were black overhead and although the rain kept off for some time, while the large congregation which had gathered there were joining in singing that lovely hymn The 231st Psalm, to the tune of Crimmond the drops came down and soon we were all feeling a little depressed. However the Ministers Representing the Religious bodies of Eynsham, Rev S Blanch, Vicar, Rev H Leigh (Methodists), & Rev R Hamper (Baptists) carried on bravely and gave us a most impressive service, Rev Hamper giving an inspiring address, their voices being carried to all parts by the loud speakers arranged in the Square. Then during the singing of the hymn 'Jesus shall reign where the sun' the sun shone through & the young voices of the choir boys could be heard clearly & the congregation joined in heartily. This service lasted about half an hour & everyone then went their various ways until 1.30 saying what a grand service it had been. The Legion men & their Standard bearer, Mr Crawford, the Women's branch & their standard bearer Mrs Harrison, the Cubs, Air Cadets, Scouts with band & the newly formed Boys Brigade, also Miss Reynolds & as many of her village choir as could attend. Mr Pratt was playing the church organ inside the church which was relayed to us outside. The various organisations had marched from the fire station headed by the Scout Band. Most people then went to their homes to watch television & listen to the radio for the Coronation in London itself took up a whole 5.1/2 hours. We of the Committee in Eynsham went straight to work putting finishing touches to our efforts to make this day a success. In Mr Hall's bakehouse huge baskets of sandwiches were prepared. The whirls of cream topped the individual jellies which had been made for the 'old folk', slab cakes were cut up into portions and pork brawn, pork roll, beef loaf, tomatoes, lettuce & cheese, were put into the sandwiches by the women. Pleasant chatter & laughter making the bakehouse echo. This was the older children's & Old Folks teas. One icecream voucher was put into the older children's tea which was put into bags, 2 sandwiches, 1 fancy cake, 1 plain 1 biscuit. Those of us who were down to prepare for the younger children made our way to the School canteen to cut up there & Mr Sharpes the headmaster kindly put the 'wireless' to their use, so that between the hustle & bustle they could hear as much as possible

of the Coronation Service. It took us from 10 o'clock to nearly 'A past one to prepare the huge stacks of food and we were quite a number of people preparing altogether. Now & again our chairman & vice chairman would pop their heads round the door to give us an encouraging word & to pick a nice looking morsel from our supply of good things also to give us a report on the weather. This really wasn't very favourable. However, we eventually completed the work we set out to do in the morning and snatching a mouthful of food set out from the bakehouse and canteen for the Square where the trailer in readiness a huge crowd had assembled to hear the Chairman's opening speech and to take part in the Fancy dress procession to the Senior Schools & Sports field headed by the Scout band under their leader Mr Perkins (Senior). What a grand speech our Chairman made. On the platform with him were the Vicar, Rev Hamper, Father Lopes, Mr James, Mr Harris, Mr A Pimm, Mrs Fox,(who led the singing) Mrs Winterbourne Treasurer Chairman of Catering Committee, Mrs Hayward (Secretary) & Mrs Mary Hall (Catering Secretary). There was quite a good display of Fancy Dresses making a colourful scene in the Square. After the Chairman's speech, lead by Mrs Fox we sang the words of that inspiring song 'ENGLAND' "GRANT LORD THAT ENGLAND AND HER SISTER NATIONS TOGETHER BOUND BY THE TRIUMPHANT SEA MAY BE RENOWNED THROUGH ALL RECORDED AGES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND TRUE CHIVALRY" And then 'God Save the Queen' How thrilled we all were to feel we were doing our share in this small village of Eynsham in celebrating the Coronation of our Queen in her capital city. Mr Gordon Blake had sent down his trailer & driver to convey all the young children taking part to the field in preparation for the judging. What a terrific job those judges had. The costumes were so nice and the children looked charming. However young Peter Ackland took first prize as The Queen's Herald and also most original coronation costume. He really deserved it with his merry bright eyes popping out with excitement when the large sum — to him a fortune — of 15/- for first prize and £2.0.0. special prize was handed to him. (Peter is only six years old at this time of writing) After the judging & during the sports for older children we gave babies in arms with their mother's tea laid in the School Canteen. This was festooned with red, white & blue streamers, red white & blue flowers were in the vases on the tables & each child had his mug full of lemonade & a straw inside for drinking through. After the meal each child could take his mug home. Little flower like shells of papier-mache were filled with all colours jellies chopped & crystallized & with a topping of icecream. I think the children ate until they could eat no more. The mothers were provided with cups of tea & their tea was in cellophane bags —sandwiches, cake & biscuits. In the domestic science room the children of from 3 to 7 years were seated with the same kind of tea as the tinies. They too, judging by the shrieks of laughter were thoroughly enjoying themselves. All this time the older children (7 to 16) were having their sports & the men a tug of war to say nothing of maypole dancing by those of the Catering Committee who could spare the

time & had enough energy left to do so. This was in the field to the music of the Isis Recording van. I have forgotten to mention sooner that the women of our Committees were very aptly dressed in Royal blue taffeta skirts, white blouses & red taffeta shawl-like scarves. It added a very pleasant touch of pageantry to the scene. By now dark clouds were gathering again and it was really quite cold & although some of the older folk went home a good number stayed for there was tea for everyone with bag tea & no one need go hungry. Now it was time for the older children to collect their bag tea, bottle of lemonade to take the ice-cream voucher (which they found inside their tea bag) to the ladies in charge of the ice-cream stall & then back to the vice chairman and Mr Hayes to collect their Coronation souvenir mugs. What a scramble oh dear our Vice chairman emerged from the fray feeling as though he had been in the middle of a January sale. Still it all made fun but the rain was literally pouring by now & we were feeling very sad for we really felt we would not be able to finish our programme that day & neither did we, but of that later on. As soon as the room where the children 3-7 had finished their tea the room was cleared & made ready for those 'old folk' who could walk or who were provided with transport. They came, these old people, to enjoy the meal prepared for them and did they make the most of it, I'll say they did. Their faces showed what they felt & I heard so many of them say 'Isn't it lovely'. Well we had tried to make it so & I feel sure Mrs Fox was amply repaid when she saw the expression of their faces for all the work she & her helpers had put in to this part of the celebrations. Each old person beside cups of tea had the choice of sherry or port to toast their Queen & I believe the Rev Father Lopes made a very nice speech. I do not know who else made speeches for here. Mr Harvey Hill, myself, Mrs Winterbourne & her husband left this part of the festivities to go round to each very old, infirm or sick person & take them ham, salad, jellies with fruit, iced cake & a drink in their own homes of either sherry or port. Oh the joy we gave these old people just let them know they were not forgotten. It was well worth all the months of hard work we had done. Once we arrived in the centre of Eynsham but it was raining so hard the dancing in the square was definitely 'off & oh the pity our fireworks & bonfire too. At this point also our free beer vouchers 'here's a health unto her Majesty' printed on a card and 1/- marked in the corner were being distributed. They very quickly got reduced & everyone lucky enough to get one was really drinking Her Majesty's Health in their favourite pub just handing in their voucher. On we went from the Square to the remainder of the old people leaving the rest of the people to go to the Institute to enjoy dancing there and I am sure they did. For myself by the time the last meal had been handed in & the last drink given our I was glad to get home, very wet but looking forward to seeing the bonfire & fireworks on the following Saturday providing the rain stopped. Incidentally before the Saturday arrived I had heard of one little girl who said 'Oh I did enjoy myself Mrs Hayward I had ice creams & another small boy who told me he had 10 bottle 'pop'. If that is anything to go by it proves Eynsham 'can do it' & did. One or two small items occurred

laughable — such as — 20 mugs being found in a box on the bonfire just before it was going to be lit the following Saturday but owners were found for them (children who were unable to attend the party so that was quite alright. We had our bonfire on the Saturday the weather was kind to us. The fireworks were grand. As someone remarked 'I've never seen a better display but then our Mr James knew a thing or two when he bought those fireworks, just which shop in London had the very best for the money. We have had our last meeting, spent our last penny. I wonder when we shall all meet again. Or if we shall & if in the years to come the youngsters of Eynsham will remember that day June 2nd 1953 & say 'We did have a good time you know' & whether they too will form a committee which will give them as much pleasure as being Secretary of Eynsham Coronation Celebrations from Sept 3rd 1952 to June 28th 1953 has given me — I sincerely hope so.

RH June 28th, 1953