

KING'S CLIFFE MAKES JUBILEE

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The long reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901 was marked by her Golden Jubilee in 1887 and her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. These were occasions, not only of rejoicing, but of "Empire" : Victoria's Britain at its greatest and its finest, an era of mighty change and growth. " God who made thee mighty; make thee mightier yet ", they sang, as on each occasion the little figure in black was drawn in her carriage to St. Paul's Cathedral, surrounded by the men of her armies and of her Navy, cheered again and again by the thousands who lined the streets of the Empire's capital. On the morning of her Diamond Jubilee, 22nd June 1897, the Queen had made use of that wonderful new invention, the telegraph, to send a message to every corner of those far flung dominions. It was a simple message: "From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them."

Now we come to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and mark it with fitting observance on the 3rd and 4th of June 2002. Not an easy fifty years for the Queen, nor yet an easy time for our Country, but " Hurrah ! Hurrah ! We'll sing the Jubilee " and we will move forward into this new century with all the determination that we greeted the beginning of the young Queen's reign in the austere days of 1952.

Would you like to know how King's Cliffe observed each of Queen Victoria's Jubilees ? Then I will tell you, with the help of the Stamford Mercury and the Peterborough Advertiser of those times. On the 24th of February, 1887, a public meeting was held at the Cross Keys inn, the Revd. Ed. Dupre presiding, to discuss what should be done to celebrate the forthcoming Jubilee. There was a fair attendance of farmers and tradesmen. The rector said that in a conversation with Mr. John Groome Howes he had suggested the re-glazing of the church windows, and Mr. Howes had promised £10 towards the cost. A committee was appointed to consider the various suggestions made at the meeting.

Stamford Mercury, 22nd April 1887: " KING'S CLIFFE: On Friday night the Jubilee Committee met in the new school-room, the Revd. P. W. Wyatt presiding. It was decided that there should be a general holiday, and that a substantial meal should be provided for all inhabitants who are willing to partake of it. It was believed sufficient funds would be obtained. The committee present subscribed £38. 3s., and the treasurer of the Cricket Club announced that he had £3 in hand to hand over to the fund, the proceeds of the concert." The Revd. P. Wyatt was curate to Rector Du Pre, and under his chairmanship of the Jubilee Committee Mr. T. J. Law was vice-chairman, Mr. George Miles treasurer, and Mr. W. Brookes, the Headmaster, secretary. The committee members solicited subscription; by early June they had collected £70. It was decided to hold the festivities on Tuesday 22nd of June, to make use of Mr. Wm. Walker's large barn in West Street for the tea-parties, and to engage the Finedon Brass Band for the day. The Sports Committee had arranged a large number of events, some to take place in the village streets, others in one of Mr. Law's fields near the centre of the village.

Then came to great day, in glorious "Queen's Weather". Here is the report given in the Mercury of 1^o July, 1887:

" KING'S CLIFFE: JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS: The celebration took place on JUNE 22nd. The church bells rang early, and people were soon astir making arches and fixing flags across the streets. The decorations were very profuse, they never having been exceeded in Cliffe. Arches were erected at Mr. G. Miles', Mr. Hawkes', the Turners Arms, and one in Pig Lane near the approach to the sports field, also under the superintendence of Mr. J. J. Bailey the committee erected an arch across the street at the entrance to Mr. Walker's yard and one over the gateway leading to the jubilee barn. Mr. F. Stokes was at great expense in constructing one which at night was illuminated with gas and several dozens of glass lamps. Another was erected at the top of West Street by the people living there. All the arches were richly decorated and had in large letters "God save our Queen" or "Long live our Queen". The committee were: Messrs. J. G. Howes, T. J. Law, G. Miles, W. Dainty, Mr. Brinkworth, Mr. Bonfield, T. Miles, E. Dixon, R. Dixon, R. Brown, L. Wade, W. Bollans, J. Hill, J.J. Bailey, F. Stokes, V. Green, E. Hawkes, and W. Brookes (secretary). The Revd. P. Wyatt was unavoidably away from home. They and other gentlemen met early to cut up the meat and make preparations for the dinner and tea, which took place in the barn lent by Mr. W. Walker. The ladies supplied all plates, knives and forks, and tea things - each providing sufficient for 12 persons and

waiting upon them. At 11.30 a.m. the men, boys and school children assembled at the barn and marched in procession to church. The Revd. D. Barratt of Nassington, surpliced and capped, walked before the Finedon band followed by a committee and other gentlemen (wearing rosettes); then came the men and boys and school children. The service was read, and Mr. Barratt gave a short address, after which the band played and the congregation sang the National Anthem. The procession was re-formed and paraded through the streets back to the barn, when nearly 400 men and boys partook of the good things provided for dinner - boiled and roast beef, boiled ham, roast legs of mutton, hot potatoes, and beer or mineral waters - all free. At 3 o'clock 500 women and children sat down to a meat tea. While this was going on a wheelbarrow race round the village and a blindfold wheelbarrow race in the streets were being run. After tea the band and people marched to a field for sports, lent by Mr. Law: there was a platform for the band and one for the rustic games. The first proceeding was with the bran tubs for the youngsters, superintended by Mrs. Howes and Mrs. Pink. The sports comprised three-legged and other foot races, sack, hurdle, and egg-and-spoon races, grinning through horse collars, eating treacle buns, a smoking concert, tug-of-war, &c. A race by gentlemen of the town of from 16 to 18 stones weight caused much fun. After the sports the band played for dancing until 10 o'clock. All appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves, and the day was made a public holiday! The committee with ladies and gentlemen of all sects and parties had striven to make the affair a success, and the satisfaction shown the day through proved that they had not failed. On the Wednesday evening the bread, meat, and beer left from the feast was given to the poor, and the sugar and tea left was made up into parcels and given to 32 widows and old men in receipt of parish relief. "

Take note, reader, of that mention of a wheelbarrow race round the village. This is mentioned in the very full memoirs of "Old King's Cliffe" which centenarian James Roberts wrote for me in 1974/5 (he died aged 101 at Lincoln 9th April 1985), and this is what he wrote of the 1887 Jubilee in `Cliffe: " Wheel Barrow Race from the Windmill Pub in West Street 1887 down to the Cross and up Park St. round by George Miles' Wood Yard then the Backway to West St. and down West St. finishing at the Windmill pub. Won by my father James Roberts. I can just remember him taking my Brother and me home to School Hill in the new barrow which he won first prize. "

Some other details connected with the Jubilee in King's Cliffe are, first the gift of a new Communion Table to the Parish Church by the Revd. P. W. Wyatt, curate (this is incised in the frame at the south end of the table); second the gift of a splendid frontal (recently restored and remounted) for the table, " in ruby velvet richly wrought in white, gold, and green silk" and given by Mrs. Howes to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. This new Communion Table replaced the fine and historic Laudian (17th century) table still preserved in the Church.

Another ten years went by; Queen Victoria reached her Diamond Jubilee, which was celebrated nation-wide on Tuesday 22nd of June, 1897. In its edition of 22nd May 1897 the Peterborough Advertiser reported on a public meeting in King's Cliffe held 14th May :

" THE COMMEMORATION AT KING'S CLIFFE:
SENSIBLE GIFT BY MR T. J. LAW

A public meeting was held on Friday evening to consider what steps should be taken to celebrate the Jubilee, and was well-attended. The Revd J. N. B. Woodroffe, Rector, was elected ex-officio chairman, Mr. J. G. Howes hon. treasurer, and Mr. W. Brookes, hon. secretary. In addition to these the following gentlemen were appointed to the committee: Mr. T. J. Law, Mr. G. Miles, Mr. W. Dainty, Dr. Lewis, Mr. E. Edgson and Mr. V. Green. The Chairman, in opening the meeting, said in offering up thanksgivings for a prosperous and peaceful reign, he thought it would be desirous to erect some permanent memorial to look back upon in after years. Mr. J. G. Howes said they had already had an informal meeting, when several matters had been suggested, which he would leave to Mr. Miles to explain. Mr. Miles said the suggestions consisted of a tea to the children, with a band of music, and a dinner to the old people over 60 years of age, should funds be forthcoming to carry these matters out. The old church clock would cost £25 to put it in repair, but he was strongly in favour of purchasing a new clock, which would cost about ...*[figure omitted]*... and he suggested they should first see how much money before they laid down a definite programme, which could then be regulated according to the money they had to deal with. Mr. T. J. Law was in favour of settling what was going to be done before they asked for funds, and as a permanent memorial he should like to see a face to the church clock. He also offered to give to the parish two old cottages which obstruct the view of the church,

which should be pulled down, and he offered the space to the church. This offer was received with loud cheers. The Chairman thanked Mr. Law for his generous offer and said the removal of the cottages would open a grand view of the beautiful church. He should like to see a skeleton face attached to the old works of the church clock if funds could not be raised for a new clock; and a free dinner to all over 60 years of age, tea for children, fete, fireworks, and other little matters that would make the amusements generally attractive. Mr. Miles did not think it would be worthwhile to spend money on the old clock. The Chairman: a new clock would cost £260. Mr. J. G. Howes said a new clock with one face would cost £125, with four skeleton dials an additional £40, to chime the quarters more, or to go in for the whole lot £82. 10s., which would amount to slightly over £200. He asked if it was thought possible to get £200. Dr. Lewis was in favour of giving a tea to the children and a dinner to the old people, and leave the other matter with the committee. The discussion was taken up by Mr. W. Brookes, Mr. J. T. Bailey, Mr. E. Dixon, Mr. R. Green (who was in favour of a better water supply for the parish), Mr. J. House, and others. It was eventually decided to provide a tea for the children under 14 years of age, a face to the clock and a new clock if funds would permit. £50 was promised in the room, and this has been increased to £60, but the people of means will have to shell out considerably more if anything of a permanent nature is to be established, as a house-to-house collection will not bring in a very large sum of money. A vote of thanks to the Chairman terminated the meeting. "

And so the great day came, in the most glorious weather ! For King's Cliffe's celebrations the Stamford Mercury gave the best and fullest account in its edition of Friday, 25th June : "KING'S CLIFFE :- The celebration of the Diamond Jubilee took place on the 22nd inst. The bells commenced to ring at 6 a.m. and continued for an hour, also at intervals during the day. All married men who thought well to apply were presented with a shilling ticket and by paying sixpence more had dinner and beer at one of the public-houses. About 180 availed themselves of this treat. At two o'clock the children assembled in the schools with a medal. Subsequently they marched in procession through the streets, headed by the Stamford Town Silver Prize Band to a field lent by Mr. Howes and sang the "Old Hundredth" and the National Anthem. After sports the children returned to the schools for tea. Sports for the men followed; again there was a wheelbarrow race round the village, this time won by a Kerfoot, second a Roberts (*presumably James Roberts*). At 10 p.m. fireworks were let off and a huge bonfire lit in Mr. Smalley's field known as "Spring Ground". All the married women were given tea on the Wednesday."

So concluded the King's Cliffe festivities in commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. For permanent memorial of the occasion the village has the two marks ; first, the "new" Church Clock, with its two dials, and striking the quarters, and second the space leading to the church gates, given by Thomas James Law, a space which was the site of two late 17th Century cottages. A plaque in the wall which limits this space reads:

PRESENTED BY
T. J. LAW, Esq
86 Square Yards of Space
TO THE CHURCHWARDENS
OF
KING'S CLIFFE
1897