



BENFLEET U3A JUBILEE BULLETIN

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Chair: Marion Coleman

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Bulletin Editor: Alan Aldridge



Congratulations and Thank You.

The members of the Benfleet u3a offer our sincere congratulations and thanks to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on her unique reign of over 70 years, bringing stability and focus to the nation.

We wish The Queen well for her Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

Who has been dressing up for the Coronation?



**Read on
and
find out!**

1952 Passing of King George VI and the Succession of Queen Elizabeth II

King George VI died in his sleep on **6 February 1952** at Sandringham. He was aged 56. After lying in state at Westminster Hall, the King's funeral was held at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where he lies buried. Queen Elizabeth II ascended to the throne immediately.



Public Announcements



Crowds in London



The Queen returns from Kenya

Penny Newman

One day in February 1952 we were all called to the hall, which was very unusual as we had attended assembly that morning. Our Headmistress announced very solemnly that King George had died earlier that day. We were allowed to go home as some of us had long journeys.

The main effect on me was that the radio, we had no television at the time, was only playing very sombre music all day. I remember the Queen and Prince Philip returning from Kenya and then the funeral of the King.



Crowds at the WW1 monument, Benfleet



Mayor announcement in Benfleet

Lyn Aldridge

I have no recollection of the death of King George VI or the Queen's coronation – only what my Mum and Dad told me. We were living in Woodford when King George VI's death was announced. I was sitting in my highchair. Mum came to me crying and saying that the King is dead. I was 16 months old.

The Coronation – and I was there!

Christine Sharp

On the evening before the Coronation my mother waited for me to come home from school, then packed a picnic with plenty of water and tea in a flask and we went up to the Mall to spend the night and await the procession. My sister came on from work in London to join us and I assume we also must have had a blanket or two.

My Mother was born in Bow, London, and always took us to Town for special occasions such as the Lord Mayor's show (every year) and all the historic buildings, palaces, dungeons, exhibitions parks etc. We always walked everywhere and I can get around London with no trouble at all but not in a car!

I was twelve and my sister sixteen. I was so excited and, although we had been to London so often and walked around all the sights, this was so different. We were fairly near the Palace and as the evening wore on the pavements began to fill up with crowds. On the front of the pavement were lines of police and guardsmen. At one time I had to crawl between the legs of a policeman to get to the portable toilets. It was all so perfectly amicable, jolly and safe so mum was OK with my going on my own, (she might have lost our vantage point if she had moved!). The night did not seem so long with such a crowd to keep us entertained. People sang and told their stories and at 6am the BBC radio came on telling us what it was like on the Mall. We all cheered because we were already there.



As the procession approached we all shouted and cheered and waved our flags. Because we were at the front we had a perfect view.

Everything seemed so extravagant. The band played. They were followed by more soldiers and guardsmen (just as we see today) and the Queen looked beautiful. She was so close to the window and waving, of course. She was very young but as I was only twelve I just thought she looked lovely. The procession passed fairly quickly and after the excitement had calmed down my mum gathered us and our bits and pieces and rushed us down to the underground on the District line train back to Becontree (then in Essex).

When we arrived home my Dad and a few neighbours were in our sitting room watching it all on the recently acquired television. We had a quick cup of tea and breakfast and then sat all together to watch the ceremony in Westminster.

Needless to say it was a very early night to bed for me!

Penny Newson

Over a year after King George died, my Mum and Dad bought a TV to watch the Coronation. The rest of the family were coming to our flat to see it. It was a tiny 9 inch screen, only black and white of course.



Then we found out that a friend from Yorkshire wanted to come to London to see the Coronation. My Dad felt that she ought to watch some of it live. He was a black cab driver and we lived in Wandsworth, which isn't too far away from Westminster. He got permission to from the owner of the taxi to use it for the day. The friend was staying with us and so Dad parked the taxi outside our flats. It was easy to do that as nobody had a car then, including us.



We watched the procession to the Abbey and the start of the ceremony on our TV. Then my Dad, Mum, Margaret (the friend) and I dashed downstairs to get into the taxi. My Dad, of course, knew the best route to take and where to leave the taxi. We walked the rest of the way to where we knew the procession would go at the end of the service. We managed to squeeze into the crowd but Margaret and I couldn't see over the heads of people.

When the carriages started to come along my Mum and Dad lifted us up so that we could see everything. I remember vividly that it was pouring with rain so the royal carriages were enclosed but the Queen of Tonga came along in an open top one. She was very brave and obviously very popular.

It was a day that I shall never forget!



How well do you know your Queen?

Our Platinum Jubilee Quiz.

Researched and devised by our resident Royal Quizmaster Jan Lane.

1. What is the Queens full name?
2. Into which Service did she enlist in WW2?
3. Where did she spend her honeymoon?
4. Where was she when she heard of her father's death?
5. Which part of her Coronation was not recorded?
6. What 2 official documents is it not necessary for the Queen to have?
7. What was Prince Philips pet name for the Queen?
8. Where is she known as 'Missis Kwin' and 'Mama belong big family'?
9. Who painted a controversial portrait of her in 1969?
10. How was Michael Fagan involved with the Queen in 1982?
11. How did she describe the year 1992?
12. What were Winston, Imperial and Burmese?
13. What event caused her noticeable sadness in 1997?
14. Which annual event did she commence in 1952, and has only missed once, in 1969?
15. Queen Victoria celebrated 63 years reign. How is Queen Elizabeth related to her?
16. Which London landmark was re-named to mark the Diamond Jubilee in 2012?
17. How were 'Gloriana' and 'Spirit of Chartwell' involved in the Diamond Jubilee events?
18. 'James Bond' escorted her from the Palace, when she made an entrance to which event?
19. How did the Queen describe Prince Philip at their Golden Wedding Anniversary?
20. How may Prime Ministers have served the Queen? And can you name them??

Answers on last page – NO PEEKING

The Coronation – and I remember the day!

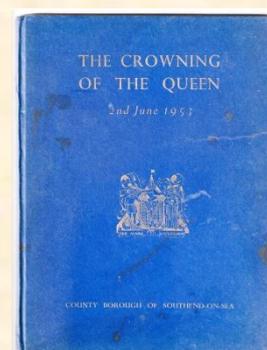
Joan Kitchener

Our road was closed and everyone brought out their tables and chairs for a street party.

The parents organised races up and down the street, three legged and wheelbarrow races. Boys against girls' races, Mums against Dads rounders' games. Then tea altogether, sandwiches and cakes, especially rock cakes. They all sang Rule Britannia and waved Union Jack flags. It was a wonderful day.

Marion Coleman

When the King had died our Head teacher made the announcement and we were all sent home. Then before the coronation all children in the Borough of Southend were given a copy of a book called "The Crowning of the Queen" presented by the County Borough of Southend. We lived in Leigh on Sea. However my husband, who lived then in Hadleigh, was presented with a book called "Royalty in Essex" presented to all schoolchildren in Essex by the County Council of Essex.



On the day of the coronation we went to the house of one of my parent's friends. They had a television set and we all sat round this tiny screen watching the procession in black and white. Then we all had tea together. I just remember cakes iced in red, white and blue.



The 'Crowning of the Queen' was also presented to **Sue Lewsey**.

Sue Downer

In June 1953 I was aged 11. We had just settled back into our bungalow on Canvey after the devastating floods. I think we were very fortunate that my Dad was able to buy our first television set - a very small screen, pictures black and white of course.

The Coronation was a welcome distraction after the problems for my parents earlier in the year. On the day, most of the neighbours in Bramble Road came to watch the event with us.

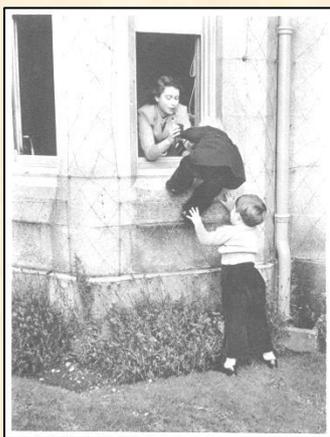
Later, we went to the Rio cinema on the island to watch the Procession and Ceremony in glorious colour - that was magic!



Jean Askew

I was nearly 7 living in Manor Park (then East Ham now Newham). We lived in a block of 6 newly built Council flats each with a family with two children - boy and girl of similar ages to my brother (Peter Wiggans) and me - ready made friends! I have a wardrobe stacked full of photos over the many years and I know I have a black and white photo of 2 of the girls and me dressed for the Coronation Party (I just cannot find it!).

There was me, tubby but happy, dressed in hand made tunic with a banner across saying Hip, Hip, Hooray! wearing a pointed party hat saying the same, one of the other girls similar but better and the third girl (we were all jealous - her Mum was a proper dressmaker!) dressed as a china doll complete with frilly lace dress and rosy cheeks and lipstick surrounded by a cardboard edging - dolly in a box!



Maybe we were off to school dressed for the celebration. Or not as I can't remember an actual party complete with food, although I do remember party games put on by the neighbours in the communal garden.

They were really happy days - bombed site at the back of the flats - hours of fun, sun shone till late at night **every day** in the summer! Ice inside the windows along with the dreaded chilblains in the winter! Most Mums knew how to cook and make the most of what they could afford - hated Mondays - always a stew made from left overs of the Sunday roast. Sunday dinner was always best and for tea if we had visitors a tin of apricots was opened with evaporated milk or even a **banana** and bread and butter!

We had the school dinners with the thickly chopped cabbage that always ended up under the table followed by sago or semolina - yuk! First sweet I remember was a slice of Mars bar chopped up between the family to share! To this day I remember how special that was - never looked back where chocolate is concerned!

At the time of Coronation, I was at Monega Road Infants then when in Juniors had to walk through Plashet Park past Trebor sweet factory to Shaftesbury School - both very long walks from home.

Photos from the book 'The Queen and Her Children' given to schoolchildren.



Christine Swift

Dressed as the Queen of Hearts for the street party.



Rina Munro

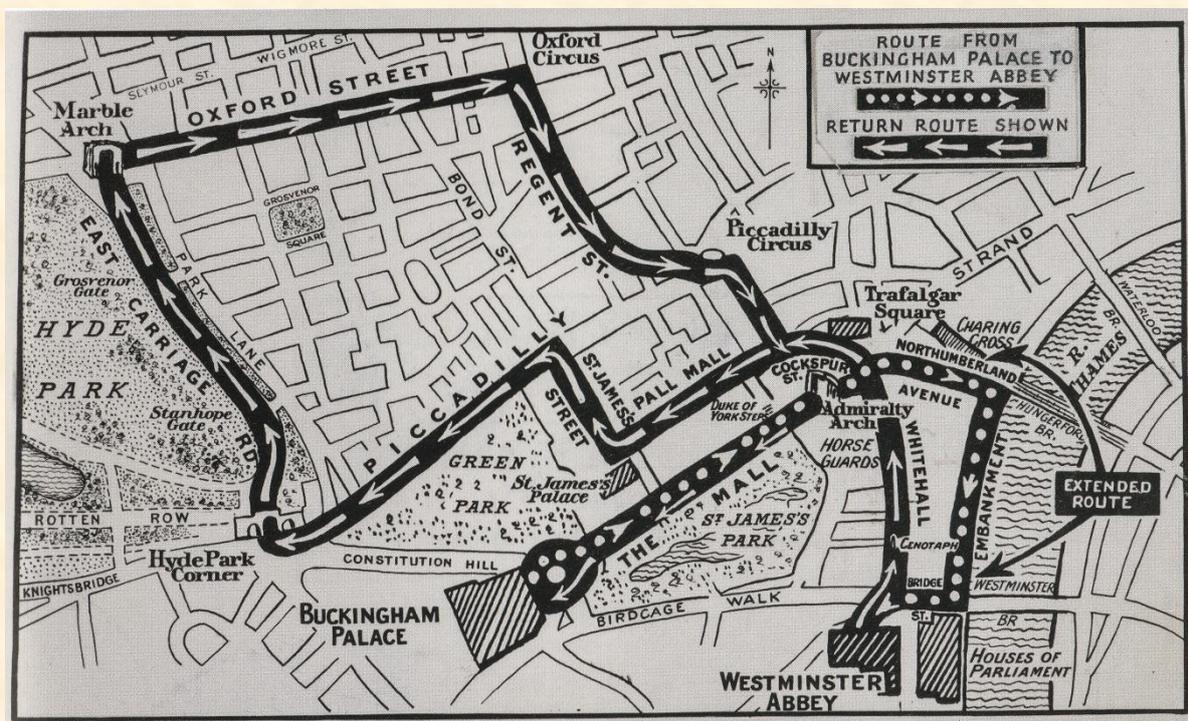
My father bought our first television to watch the crowning and just as the archbishop raised his hands to place the crown on the queen's head the picture disappeared, so we missed the most important part of the proceedings.

Janet Rawley

While writing, my memories of the coronation are that I was at primary school at Laindon, and we practised for hours dancing round a maypole. The girls were dressed in Elizabethan costume and the boys too. The skirt was latterly made into an ordinary length by my mother; the material was Horrockses, which was very good at the time.

But unfortunately I have not got one photo of the event, which is a shame. We went to our Senior School in Laindon and performed our dance there.

The Coronation procession route:



Vera Smith

At that time I was at a school in Loughton, Essex. I expect I heard about the death of King George VI by radio and saw the Coronation on Pathe News at the local cinema.

All school children were given a special book about the Royal family. Times were hard for a lot of people then especially as my father was in hospital a lot of the time. I was in the Girls Life Brigade and one summer our group came to Crowstone Church for a holiday. We slept on camp beds in the church hall. I remember crossing the bridge over the railway line near Cliffs Pavilion, which wasn't there then. I went to a home in Westcliff for tea with a girl nicknamed 'Bubbles' because she had curly hair. I remember it had a large garden with a stream running along the end of it. I was a bit overwhelmed as I had never seen a house like that before.

Our Girls Life Brigade group was chosen as one of the ones to sing at the Royal Albert Hall. Sandy McPherson, a musician and presenter, came and coached us at our base in Wanstead. We sang 'Orpheus and his Lute' and 'Elizabeth of England,' which had been composed especially for the occasion. We were placed in front of the organ pipes I remember, perhaps we weren't very good!!! The then Duchess of Gloucester was in attendance.



We were all very excited about going to the Royal Albert Hall. Unfortunately, I don't remember anything else about the show as I was probably too nervous to take it all in.

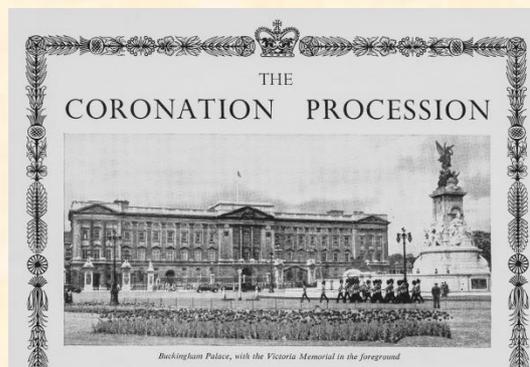


Lorraine Langridge

My memory of the coronation is very vague, I was just three years old, but it must have made an impression on me. My Nans cousin had bought one of these new-fangled TV things, furniture big enough to fill the room and screen about the size of a laptop. The whole family, plus probably neighbours as well, gathered in a small sitting room to watch, curtains drawn of course to improve the picture quality.

The most exciting part for me was when we children were given lollies to suck, obviously to keep us quiet, but a previously unknown treat!

I have a Souvenir Programme for the Coronation, price 2'6.



Annette Firth

Dressed as Nell Gwynn on Coronation Day

The street party at Stanley Road, Hornchurch, was held in the local hall because of rain.



Alan Aldridge

Preparations for the Coronation are my very earliest memories. We lived in Bow near the Old Ford Locks in a road about half a mile long. Although our house had survived bombing, much of the surrounding area was decimated. Most of these areas had been cleared and a mix of prefabs, play areas, allotments and waste ground.

Half way up our street, 3 houses had been destroyed and the rubble remained on this plot. I was aware that something was happening around April 1953 when the rubble started to be moved and timber delivered onto site. Over the next few weeks a wooden hut and entrance were built, bit like a scout hut. This was to be the focal point for the street on Coronation Day.

I received an official invitation to the street party and duly dressed up as a 5 year old pirate and won the 5 year old competition (possibly the only entrant) and received a wooden sailing boat – not great by modern standards but a treasured possession in those days – which I still have.

I regularly sailed the boat in the Victoria Park boating ponds but often waded in to retrieve it when there was no wind. Still a pirate at heart!



Peter Lewsey dressed up as a schoolboy in a raincoat for a trip to London during Coronation week.



Tina Clark

A fine drawing of a Queen's Corgi



Sandra Bedwell

A fine china commemorative Coronation tea set



The Coronation – I was around but don't recall anything!



Lyn Aldridge

To celebrate the Queen's Coronation there was a street party where all the children dressed up.

My Mum made my fairy dress and my Dad made my wand and wings.

I was 2yrs 8m old.

Ian Phipps

I was born in September 1952, mid-way between the King's death and the Queen's Coronation. Apparently on the Queen's Coronation Day, I made my first, and as far as I am aware, only roundtrip in the sidecar of a motorcycle combination.

There is a family story about the Coronation Day that I have heard on a number of occasions, during my lifetime.

My father came from a large family, with a number of the family members, including my parents, living in the Thundersley/Benfleet area. Mother's family had moved from London, to Canvey Island, at the start of the war. Most still resided on the Island, at the time of the Coronation, including my grandparents.



The only family members to have a television were my mother's parents. In 1953 few people owned a car, but one of my father's brothers owned a motor cycle combination. While mother's family members could walk to my grandparent's house, in order for my father's family to watch the Coronation, my uncle made four trips, ferrying family members from Thundersley/Benfleet to the south side of the Island, which were repeated following the Coronation, returning family members home.

Our grateful thanks to all of our contributors – for snippets, stories, photos, books, programmes and memorabilia. Hope you have enjoyed the Jubilee Bulletin.

Answers: Platinum Jubilee Quiz

1. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor
2. The ATS, as a truck and ambulance driver and mechanic
3. At Birkhall on the Balmoral Estate, via Broadlands
4. Treetops, Kenya
5. The Anointing and Communion
6. A Passport and Driving Licence
7. Cabbage
8. Papua, New Guinea
9. Pietro Annigoni
10. He climbed over a Buckingham Palace wall and entered the Queens bedroom
11. My 'Annus horribilis'
12. Horses she rode for the Trooping of the Colour
13. Decommissioning of the Royal Yacht Britannia
14. The Christmas broadcast to the Commonwealth
15. Paternal great, great granddaughter
16. Big Bens Clock Tower became The Elizabeth Tower
17. They were used as the Royal Barges for the Thames Pageant
18. The opening of The 2012 Olympic Games
19. 'My strength and stay'
20. 14 (or 15 as one served twice)

List of Prime Ministers during her reign to date:

1951-1955 Winston Churchill	1979-1990 Margaret Thatcher
1955-1957 Anthony Eden	1990-1997 John Major
1957-1963 Harold Macmillan	1997-2007 Tony Blair
1963-1964 Alec Douglas-Home	2007-2010 Gordon Brown
1964-1970 Harold Wilson	2010-2016 David Cameron
1970-1974 Edward Heath	2016-2019 Teresa May
1974-1976 Harold Wilson	2020- Boris Johnson
1976-1979 James Callaghan	

