

KILVE'S GOLDEN BOOK

2002

David Heard

KILVE'S GOLDEN BOOK

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PREFACE

All villages have their own ways of celebrating, especially for something as rare as a golden jubilee. This book is the result of an invitation to village residents of Kilve to describe in words or pictures the thoughts the occasion stimulates:

As a result, we now have a collection of poetry and prose, fact and fiction, sketches and drawings which, when taken together, reflect the feelings of the village and in turn underline a desire for a national event, especially honouring a Head of State. We are fortunate in having a kingdom established over centuries of history: we are doubly fortunate in having our much admired and respected present monarch, Queen Elizabeth, fulfil that role over 50 years of enormous social and technological change.

Thus this book is an appreciation of 50 years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Kilve, June 2002

MILESTONES

by Doreen Chedzoy

National events jog our personal memories and royal celebrations punctuate our lives. Queen Elizabeth II's jubilee year makes us pause.

Some of us can remember just where we were when we heard that her father had died. I was in the staff room at Bishop Fox's Girls' Grammar School in Taunton - a student on teaching practice. The news broke at the morning interval and we had to console many weeping girls. Where were you that day?

Do you remember the Pathe news pictures of that slim young woman stepping from the plane which brought her home from Kenya to confront her destiny? As a schoolgirl, I'd seen her in person some years earlier when she came to initiate the start of the rebuilding of the blitzed Coventry. Remember, most people didn't have television and so pictures of people in the news were rarer than today.

Who remembers pictures of the young Princess Elizabeth with Princess Margaret Rose looking over the balcony of Buckingham Palace at the Silver Jubilee of her grandfather, King George V? Or, on the same balcony, wearing a coronet at the coronation of her father and mother in 1937?

In 1952, less than 10 years after the end of the war, some food was still rationed and clothing coupons meant that buying a new dress had to be carefully thought out - unless you had a mother like mine who could 'run-up' something from curtain material which needed fewer coupons!

All sorts of material was gathered to make bunting ready to decorate the streets for the eventual coronation. My father, who remembered the coronation of King Edward VII, noted that, "soon after the death of Queen Victoria, the mills of the north threaded their looms and machines with red, white and blue cotton to make flags and bunting for the following year". Today, I note how many flags have little labels saying 'Made in China'!

Often, at these times, people buy, or are given, souvenirs to mark the special event. Will there be celebration mugs for children this year? Some of us have acquired mugs to mark coronations, royal jubilees, royal longevity and the like. These may even have been handed down from parents and grandparents, the earlier ones now being valuable collectors' items. In this 'throw-away' age how long will 2002 mugs survive?

Some things are different - some remain the same! Local communities will celebrate in time-honoured fashion. There will be church services, houses will be decorated, excited children dressed for jollifications, people baking for the feasts - no change there! It's a certainty that this time there will be more bureaucracy and red tape, but people's natural resilience and determination will ensure that the celebrations will take place according to the wishes of each individual community.

The precision and colour of the pageantry which stops a nation in its tracks makes us aware for a moment in history of our heritage. Brightening up London on a dull day, the coloured images are secured in our memory, to be brought to the forefront of our minds at some future date as milestones in our lives where the personal and the national touch for a fleeting moment. And now we can add to our memories those events which will happen at 2002, the year of the jubilee.

BRINGING HOME THE NEWS...

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I have such a clear memory of running home from school fifty years ago, bursting with the news. It was so exciting and I was sure no one at home had heard. 'Mummy, Mummy, the King's dead!' I had no idea of the implications and it was to be many years before I realised something of what King George VI meant to this country after the war... and we've all been reminded again with the recent death of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. So it was not good news that I brought and I could not understand that there was no glory in bringing bad news.

Within a few months we had moved from a city of 2,500 people (like a big village) to a town of 50,000 people, from Scotland to the middle of England. My Grandmother in a neighbouring town bought a Television so that we could all gather to watch the Coronation, but it wasn't the ceremony that moved us, it was the sight and sound of the Scottish Pipe Bands. I can still feel that tug of homesickness. If there were local parties we didn't know anyone nor were we known so as to join in.

25 years later it was a different matter: back in village life with two parishes outside Yeovil and with two small boys... belonging in a community and with Silver Jubilee celebrations that involved all the generations. Even then we were conscious of the continuity and stability that a reign of 25 years brings. It was a time for giving thanks.

A further 25 years on, in a country much changed, it is remarkable that we have the same strength of village life, that fine example of duty and service to the nation given by our Queen over five decades, and an opportunity once more to celebrate and give thanks. May the children of today remember this Golden Jubilee with great pleasure in another half century.

QUEEN'S PUDDING

by Rosemary Semple

On coming home from nursery school one lunchtime I was met by my mother who announced: "The King is dead, so we are having 'Queen's Pudding'. Thus was my introduction to Her Majesty's 50 years as Sovereign. I don't remember having Queen's Pudding many times after that momentous day: if anyone has the recipe it might be a world-beater this year. It featured jam, but other ingredients escape me.

In 1952 there were only three television sets in our village. I remember a sort of pilgrimage to these three families, who became Gods for the day of the Coronation. Presumably my parents (and others) were anxious about outstaying their welcome at any one house, and we all had to move on after an hour or so of squinting at a grainy black and white screen the size of a postage stamp housed in a cabinet as large as a small car.

As the Coronation of George VI, following the abdication of Edward VIII, had happened within the lifetime of almost all adults, and that of George V was within relatively recent memory, there was possibly less excitement about yet another Coronation than there might have been. Had we known it would be over 50 years before there was another one we might have relished the uniqueness of it all a bit more. The fact of actually watching television was to me of greater interest than the Coronation itself.

The only time I have ever seen the Queen 'in real life' was some years later when she came to an enactment of our School Pageant. I had to ride a horse, dressed as a 'nobleman' in a tunic, with doublet and hose and carrying a sword. There was an elaborate behind-the-scenes choreography involving much semaphore with handkerchiefs waved from behind rhododendrons to bring us in on cue. I had to dismount on the words 'Now whoa Good Bess' from the narrator, but my riding school pony caught sight of a suddenly waved white flag from a nearby bush and tried to make a bolt for it. I was hopelessly entangled in stirrups, reins and sword while half-way down and landed in a heap at Her Majesty's feet, my grand entrance in as many tatters as my 'hose'. It was probably the only entertaining moment for her of the whole afternoon.

Leaving aside the important Constitutional implications I cannot see any elected or appointed President undergoing with such equanimity the endless round of so many tedious duties as the Queen has performed over the last 50 years which have brought so much excitement and pleasure to so many. The people of this country are not dragooned into the streets on royal occasions: they flock there - sometimes in hundreds, sometimes in tens of thousands to participate in and enjoy them. We mock and deride such enthusiasm at our peril. Long live the Monarchy!

and now for the recipe of

Queen's Pudding

also known as **Queen of Puddings**

3/4 pint of milk - 1 oz. of butter-grated rind of half a lemon

2 eggs, separated - 2 oz. caster sugar

3 oz. fresh white breadcrumbs - 2 tbsps red jam

Warm milk, butter and lemon rind. Lightly whisk egg yolks and half of the sugar and pour on milk, stirring well. Strain over breadcrumbs, pour into a greased 2 pint ovenproof dish and leave to stand for 15 minutes. Bake at 180°C for 25-30 minutes until lightly set; remove from oven. Warm jam and spread over pudding. Whisk egg whites stiffly and add the remaining sugar, whisk again and fold in half the remaining sugar. Pile the meringue on top of the jam and bake for a further 15-20 minutes until the meringue has lightly browned.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

by Sheila Sharp

In February 1952 I was working as a personal secretary to a journalist and film critic called Stephen Watts. Among other things he wrote a monthly column about what was happening in the British film scene for the New Yorker. When the King died he was asked to write a piece about his funeral and he sent me to a vantage point (near Hyde Park Corner) to make notes, while he took up a position at Palace yard. The piece which follows is a collaboration between the two of us.

The London scene, as the cortege passed through the streets between Westminster and Paddington, was like a steel engraving. The sky was grey but the sun shone through, glinting at moments on the gold-tipped white helmets of the Royal Marines' band to produce a tropical effect, shining dully at other times, through clouds, to dull to gunmetal grey the cuirasses of the Sovereign's escort. The bare trees filled a background to the black-and-grey scene so that when the procession passed through the pillared arches of Hyde Park Corner its slow pace seemed, to the observer's eye, to hold it almost static, a fluid history flowing like mercury, until the shine of a bandsman's trombone or the irrepressible pageantry of red tunic and white plume brought it to life and movement again.

If the scene at Palace yard were not charged enough with emotion, the sudden appearance of a naval party to pipe the coffin aboard the gun carriage touched it off. The eerie wail of the bosuns' pipes pierced the air and made the hush more profound than it had been.

The long rise and fall of Piccadilly, quite empty, gradually gave shape to the misty head of the procession. The faint skirl of the pipes preceded anything that could be seen. The throat tightened while there was nothing yet to see.

In Hyde Park a row of red buses stood in line, a strange accidental streak of colour. Under the trees the maintenance troops and drivers who brought the soldiers to their sad duty discreetly brewed the inevitable tea, then slipped off to find their places among the civilians. Their maroon berets and camouflaged coats suggested the functional aspects of military uniform, but they merged with the crowd as civilians, asking no privilege as they had no place in the ceremonial, and they simply served to lend a touch of colour to the crowd.

Behind the lined route, among the trees, stood the transports which had brought the troops. Ordinary charabancs, with holiday names like Torquay and Bournemouth and Margate painted on them, made one realise the distance the troops had come to play their part.

For stretches of the way the soldiers were Territorials, all the more homely and touching for not being so impeccably smart as the Guards or the Marines. These rather lumpy figures were no martial automatons but normal, peaceful citizens of a nation that can be warlike and soldierly, but only when called upon to be so.

The crowd was far from silent until the first murmur of the approaching procession came; then they settled into stillness. For all the dark clothes it was not a colourless crowd. There were bright headscarves lighting up costumes which did not allow for the sharp air; bearded Indians bursting into colour with their pink and lilac turbans. By now the only sound was the harsh word of the command to the soldiers, dressing them smoothly into line by the kerb, bringing them to attention, into the mute melancholy of the reversed arms position and later to the sound of "present" to the monarch who had passed and the monarch who rode behind, shrouded in black but still their ultimate commander.

The easy task of silencing the crowd was completed by the first far off note of the bands. The cry of the vendor of periscopes "See right over the top for a bob" as he peddled crude sticks surmounted by a tiny square of mirror, and of the aggressive programme vendor asking a shilling for what was in all the newspapers, better printed, died away as the deep threnody of brass came over the still air. The Dead March in Saul. Suddenly all interest passed away from the mounted police and the guards officers on dappled greys, who had been the only movement to watch, and all eyes turned to the east. It was a

solid mass of one-way heads, except for the inevitable ambulance man leading away the inevitable chalk-faced woman who had overestimated her own stamina and would never now see what she had spent so many hours waiting for.

Even now the waiting was long, so slow was the procession. Not the ceremonial slow march but a measured gait, the sound of which on the sanded paving beat so insistent a crunching rhythm that one became attuned to it, even breathing in time with it.

The guns which had been firing afar off suddenly started nearer. A preliminary shudder ran through the crowd and no-one knew why. The sound was exactly that of the wartime barrage, thudding in the ears and stomach and though it brought now no menace or danger its reminder was of gloomy nerve-strained days, curiously linked in spirit with the man now going to his rest. As the gunfire, merging into a slow saraband of brass notes, ran down the sky like thunder, flights of startled birds took off from the trees and swooped in formation - dark, graceful silhouettes which might have been drilled to describe these mournful, dipping figures.

As the procession passed the eye caught the flashes of colour The green and saffron of the Irish Guards pipe band. The bobbing white hackles in the berets of London's local regiment, the Royal fusiliers. The flash of white at the chests of naval detachments, offset by the unfamiliar black chinstraps holding their caps.

If it were necessary to be made to realise that this is a day in which not only London and Britain mourn, the arrival of the Commonwealth detachments would serve as the corrective. How profound seems the mourning of a row of men with black faces showing above khaki greatcoats and below slouch hats. After the West Africans come the Canadians, tall and erect; the Scots Canadians, with their panache of red toories of their balmorals rising above the drab khaki, the unmistakable Australian hats, the peaked New Zealanders.

As they pass from sight there is what no split second organisation can avoid, the sad dissonance of two bands heard at once; as Chopin's Funeral march fades the first whiff of pipes, almost more felt than heard, brings "The Skye Boat Song" heart-rendingly on the chill breeze.

Suddenly the V.I.P.s are upon us. Despite the anonymity of the uniform the crowd spots its heroes. The whisper "Monty" goes round. "Where?" "There with the Field Marshal's baton." A slight figure is established, more immaculate than the crowd is familiar with; the well-known battle-dressed figure is in a long greatcoat, formalised further by the red and gold baton held to his hip.

The crunch of the feet on sand is replaced by the faster tempo of restless horses and the gun carriage approaches, heralded by the Sovereign's Escort. There is no quenching the pageantry now. The Life Guards are all red tunics, white plumes, silver and gold helmets and cuirasses - the only mourning note is the black of the horses. One realises that the majesty they represent is continuous, their magnificence and meaning are endless: their charge is the monarch, in life and death, and they have both now. Their splendour is applicable equally to mourning the dead or celebrating the living. At a coronation they will not remind one of a funeral; at a funeral they are equally appropriate. They are royalty's seemly setting.

Of the rest there is little to say. The fairy coaches are today tragic caskets of grief we do not wish to penetrate, only to respect. In the first, the four veiled women are unidentifiable, but one does not mind. One knows only too well who they are. One wants to look the other way and to assure them that, whatever public duty may be, private grief is more inviolate for being shared with no more demonstration than our presence and our bowed heads.

So the strains of Beethoven, of Chopin, of "Saul" and "My Home" and "Loch Rannoch" fade towards Paddington. There the almost intolerably moving "Jerusalem" and Handel's "Largo" swell out from massed bands as the train is sealed. London turns away from its last farewell, until two hours later, the guns boom and the city falls silent for two minutes as, without pageantry but, halting in the stream of their daily affairs, the people stop and meditate, and commiserate with those who only a few miles away at Windsor are taking a later farewell of one who was not only their beloved king, but their husband, son, father and friend, at once a symbol and a person, equally revered.

At the time of the death of the King I was working in Mayfair. Having had lunch, I took my lunchtime stroll in Hyde Park. Crossing Park Lane by the Dorchester - in those days it was still one two-way road - I had just reached the park when the gun was fired for the three-minute silence. All traffic came to a halt and switched off engines. Bus conductors and drivers stood by their buses and removed their caps. Taxi drivers and their passengers stood by their cabs, and all pedestrians stood motionless. There was total silence until the gun was fired again after three minutes. All vehicles started up and it was not long before London's traffic roar was back. A moment I will always remember - never likely to happen again.

Les Wittey

EVENTS OF 1952

So what was it like in 1952? Perhaps you're too young to know, or perhaps you're too old to remember - but more likely, if you're like me, I'm not sure exactly what happened in which year.

The world environment saw Harry S. Truman in his last year as President of the U.S.A., Joseph Stalin at the helm in the USSR and Winston Churchill as our Prime Minister. King Farouk of Egypt was overthrown and Eva Peron of Argentina died. Albert Schweitzer won the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize. McCarthyism swept the USA. The Korean War continued and the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya started. The European Iron and Steel Community (the fore-runner of the European Union) was formed. In Britain, we still had food rationing, and we were still in a period of economic stringency.

In the arts world, Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" was published. Vivien Leigh won an Oscar for Best Actress for her performance in "A Streetcar named Desire", and "Singin' in the Rain" was first shown. On a lighter note, the first British pop singles chart was published. A significant event in the British theatre was the first performance of the long run of "The Mousetrap".

In Sport, the Olympic Games were held in Helsinki, and Emil Zatopek was the star distance runner. Rocky Marciano became world heavyweight boxing champion, Frank Sedgman and Maureen (Little Mo) Connolly won Wimbledon and US tennis singles titles. Newcastle United won the F.A. Cup, beating Arsenal 1-0.

The scientific world produced some surprises, not all of them perhaps praiseworthy. Cinerama was first shown in the USA. Britain exploded its first atomic bomb, while the USA detonated the world's first hydrogen bomb in the Pacific and the USSR successfully launched an InterContinental Ballistic Missile. At Beverly Hills, the first video recorder was demonstrated, while in Manchester, the Ferranti company offered the world's first commercially available (and British developed) computer for sale at £100,000.

In the U.K. Susan and David were the most popular Christian names for babies. Streaky bacon was sold at 2s.0d. a lb (or 11p per 500 gm), Cheddar cheese was priced at 6d. a lb (about 3p per 500 gm), half-a-dozen eggs fetched 2s. Od. and a pint of pasteurised milk cost 5d. (about 2p.) Inflation really has taken its toll as £1 of today's money is equivalent to between 5p and 6p in 1952. You could buy a new small Ford Popular for under £400.

1952 was rated as one of the warmest years, and it was a notable year for British weather records, too. There was a tornado destroying 32 homes in Chesterfield in May, very strong December gales with 96 knots recorded at Cranwell, and a heavy snowfall in Essex in March. But what 1952 will be most remembered for are the floods of Lynmouth and the Great Smog of London. On August 14 the sixth highest 24-hour rainfall occurred when 225mm of rain fell at Longbarrow on Exmoor, giving rise to the flooding of the East and West Lyn rivers, causing 30 deaths. The Great Smog lasted from 4th December until the 9th with exceptionally poor visibility, with claims that it was as little as 1 foot. The smog seeped into theatres and cinemas and caused the cancellation of operas, and it is reputed to have been so thick in cinemas that the screen could not be seen by the audience. Nearly 4,000 people were estimated to have died as a result, mostly from respiratory and heart problems.

SOMERSET COUNTY GAZETTE - Small Ads, 1952

RESIDENTIAL VACANCIES:- Cleaners, starting wage £3

per week, 47 hours, plus full board and lodging. 2 weeks leave per year. Cooks, £3. 15s., overalls provided and laundered free.

VILLAGE LOCATION: Modern semidet res 2 rec, 3 beds, bath (h & c) large garden, all servs, possession, £3,600,

Kilve & District WI 1952/53

by Phyllis Lemon

In June 2002 we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Queen Elizabeth but June 2002 is another celebration, it is in fact the Diamond anniversary of Kilve & District WI - Yes, we have been singing 'Jerusalem' and making our jam for sixty years! I should now like to share with you some of my memories of that time in our lives.

In those days we would start each WI meeting with 'Jerusalem', as we do today but we would end every meeting with the 'National Anthem' a custom which sadly, has now been dropped. During this period Mrs. Trayler was President, followed by Mrs. Lewis. Miss Walland was Secretary, followed by Miss Perrett and Mrs. Lewis was Treasurer, followed by Mrs Kennedy, and Mrs. Napper ran our trading stall.

I remember that at our meeting in January '52, Mr. Chilcott, a blind basket maker from Williton came to give us a demonstration of his craft and the competition that month was for the best doily made out of greaseproof paper.

Our February meeting is vividly recalled because we all stood in silence for one minute as our King, George V1 had passed away. Princess Elizabeth was now Queen Elizabeth. At that same meeting we were all fascinated when Mr. Alexander gave us a demonstration of an electric Singer sewing machine! The competition that day was a bowl of Hyacinths and members were asked for cotton reels to be made into toys for charity

Another vivid memory, for me in particular, came in March when Mrs. Moberly Sharp decided to produce an entertainment of three one act plays, to be acted by members of the WI. I have reason to remember Mrs. Moberly Sharp very well - bright RED hair, bright RED lips and a bright RED fiery nature! I was given the job of helping with the props and a mantelpiece clock was needed. I suppose

I must have been standing around dreaming and was shouted at to go and fetch one straight away. I should tell you that she was very handy with her walking stick! The pain was not in vain however as we were told at the April meeting that we had made a profit of £7.18s.3d for WI funds. That month, April, a choir was formed by Mrs. Prior and at the Taunton choir festival they gained gold stars - we were all very proud. Furthermore, our bank balance now stood at the impressive sum of £36.6s.5d in hand with £2.00 in the petty cash!

By June we realised that it was very difficult for our WI and Red Cross members to make our visits to Williton Hospital as we needed help to carry magazines and supplies to the patients. A request was made to the Western National Bus Company for buses to be run via Kilve past the hospital and much to our delight, they obliged. June also marked ten years of WI in the village and a birthday cake was cut to celebrate. During that month I also recall that great fun was had by all at a square dance on Kilve Court lawns. During August, members ran several stalls at the fete at Kilve Court

After that, Kilve village hall was being reconstructed and our meetings were held at East Quantoxhead and I seem to recall that our October meeting was held in Holford 'Hut'.

Everyone was keen to be involved and in November '52 nineteen nominations were received for the committee, - 50 years on, Frances Napper is the only survivor of the twelve women elected to that committee. In December, our choir, conducted by Mrs. Prior, arranged a carol service and it raised £6.6s.0d for the King George V1 Memorial Fund. We also held a jumble sale in the Hood Arms. club room, entrance was 3d and tea and biscuits 3d!

1953 was to be Coronation Year and our plans for celebrating the Coronation had been sent to WI County press correspondent. For the Coronation we learned that ten seats had been allocated to Somerset, so towards the end of 1952 we sent in names from our institute to be included in the WI ballot - but no luck!

By April '53 we were back to our own village hall in Kilve. Back then the charge for the hire of the hall for our monthly meeting was 7s.6d, committee meeting 5s.0d, and play reading or choir meeting 3s.0d by the way, the choir had gained two gold stars and one silver star at the choir festival!

At that time, I remember that County library books were stored in the Hood Arms club room and Frances Napper and I, (I was Phyllis Nuttall then) were in charge of lending them out each Friday afternoon. I recall one old lady who used to ask me to read the last page of each 'love' book to see if it all ended happily before she would take it away!

Finally, in those days we would have a motto for the month, some of these were as follows:-

Every morning is a world made new

Keep your temper, no-one else wants it

Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind

The only way a woman can remain forever young is to grow old gracefully

Of all the things you wear your expression is the most important

If winter comes can Spring be far behind?

Whilst I was writing this for our Golden Book I spoke with my friends, Grace Thorne and Frances Napper and asked them what they particularly recalled of these times.

Grace said "I can remember that my late husband, Sam, planted an oak tree over by the telephone box. That was given by Mrs. Cooke Hurle for the Coronation"

Frances said "I remember we had a meeting in the village hall to elect a Coronation committee. I persuaded my husband, Walter to come along. He was usually very reluctant to attend meetings as he was always so busy on the farm but on this occasion he came and to our surprise was elected as Secretary. I recall that, as well as other activities, we put on a big 'Coronation Tea' in the village hall - we got everything we needed from the village bakery. Something else I particularly remember is that my daughter, Ruth had been chosen to give a bouquet of flowers to Mrs. Cooke Hurle at the celebrations at Kilve Court. I was feeling very proud but at the last minute she would not do it so I had to ask an older girl to take her place - we have often laughed about it since."

Sir William Walton composed the Te Deum Laudamus especially for the Coronation. Sheila Sharp who worked for him for a number of years, has this special autograph.

XVI. Te Deum Laudamus

The solemnity of the Queen's Coronation being thus ended, the people shall stand, and the choir shall sing:

William Walton

CORONATION DAY

by Beryl Bridgewater

We're having a party in our street!
I'm so excited, I can hardly wait.
The Queen is being crowned today,
It's something to celebrate.

The flags are up, we're out of school
Long tables and chairs are steady,
Balloons and bunting, fun and games,
I hope the food is ready!

Sausages, sandwiches, jelly and cake,
Lemonade, squash and pots of tea -
I hope I can sit next to my friend;
It's almost as good as a day at the sea.!

The band will be there so we can sing,
And listen to music they play;
We'll all stand up for "God save the Queen"
It's such an important day!

The Queen will be in a golden coach;
I wish I could go to London to see,
But I'll have to wait for the pictures –
Here in Somerset it's a long way to be!

I've got a new dress of red, white and blue-
Mum made it really quick;
I'm going to be late if I don't hurry up,
Oh, I hope I'm not going to be sick.

A SPECIAL YEAR

by Bernard Law

In the spring of 1952, I married my wife.

It was a special year for Nell and myself, for my sister Marie emigrated to Canada to renew her friendship with Michael, a former Polish soldier. He had preceded her to Canada, living and working near the town of Moosonee in northern Ontario where uranium had been found in the vicinity of the Hudson Bay. They also married in November of that same year.

My sister speaks to this day of the great difficulties of getting to the church because of the very deep snow drifts. The priest had to find witnesses for the marriage service and he eventually found an Indian trapper and his squaw, so that the marriage could take place. They were also the only members of the congregation!

After some years, they moved south to London, Ontario, both finding work and making friends in the Polish community around Elliot Lake.

To go back in time a little, in fact to 1944, I first met Michael when he was stationed near Ancona in Italy. He was serving in the Carpathian Infantry Division of General Anders 2nd Polish Corps, whilst I was with the 38th Irish Infantry Brigade. In the short time we were together, we exchanged home addresses, Michael saying, "Please come to my home in Koszalin on the Baltic coast for a holiday after this war ends."

Events, of course, were to prove rather more difficult for this to happen because of the political situation in Poland. It so transpired that Michael was sent to Scotland with other Poles while some moved to Australia, England and Canada.

However, when the war in Italy ended, I was sent to Austria near the border with Yugoslavia and spent a further eighteen months there.

Michael assumed I was also demobilised, and travelled to my home in Worcestershire during a holiday from Scotland to renew our acquaintance. Of course, I wasn't there - but he met my family including my sister, and they fell in love!

Michael and Marie decided on making a new life for themselves in Canada. He went first alone to find a house and work before asking my sister to join him. The rest you know from this small true story.

Unfortunately, Michael died quite young aged 44 in 1964, attributed to wounds sustained at the battle of Monte Cassino. In that same year, my wife and I came to live in Kilve, our two children were brought up here in the Quantock hills, a most beautiful part of West Somerset.

The only time I have had the honour of seeing our own Queen Elizabeth was in 1987 when she visited Bridgwater, but I was not able to see her on the 2nd of May this year when she visited Taunton. We all now hope she will reign for many more years.

Ray Saunders remembers Coronation Year in Tunbridge Wells specifically as the year he bought his first motorcycle with a deposit of £40 on a Triumph Twin. However, Jill Saunders recalls Coronation Day for a very different reason. She'd been with friends watching the ceremony on Television in London, and developed stomach pains during the evening. In the night she had to have an emergency trip to hospital for an appendicitis operation!

FIFTY YEARS ON

by Robbie Rutt

"Leonard, you will never manage that in a month of Sundays!" My father commanded great respect in our local community of Bicknoller but the idea of him and a very close friend being able to get television transmission from Sutton Coldfield beggared belief. The Wenvoe transmitter in Wales was up and running but in those very early days of the 1950s the lovely Quantock Hills precluded any part of our village getting any television signal at all. But they succeeded! And so we used to sit in front of our little 12-inch K.B. television set and watch the flickering black and white pictures being sent to us all the way from the Midlands. Mister Pastry, Ronnie Waldman's Puzzle Corner, Annette Mills and Muffin the mule are but a few of the programmes I can recall. Us kids thought it was magic, and I guess, to get the signal in those days was a bit of magic.

And so the big day came: June 2nd, 1953. Oh, how I boasted to everyone that we were going to be among the privileged few to see the coronation on television. But as I have already said, my father was much loved and respected, so that when the big day came, our lounge in fact, I was full to capacity with all our friends and neighbours think it could have been half the village! came to see our "brand new" Queen crowned in the beautiful surroundings of Westminster Abbey.

The hazy picture, the speckly background didn't bother us a bit: in fact, nobody seemed to notice it for one second. The Bishop of Bath & Wells took a very important part in the proceedings and, well, he was "local" and belonged to us, so that made us feel important, too.

Some years later, in 1960, I was to join the Union Castle Line as an officer in the Purser's Departments and just a few months prior to my appointment I can recall seeing more television pictures, this time of HM the Queen Mother launching the Royal mail steamship "Windsor Castle". The most luxurious liner to be launched in years,

it boasted the highest bridge of any ship afloat and was the fourth largest liner in the world. Little did I know that my career would end with me as Chief purser on the "Windsor", and it was during this time, and on this ship that we celebrated in a very magnificent way the Silver Jubilee of our Queen.

With a ship of that name, of course one had and expected lots of "royal" associations, and sad as we were when the ship made its final journey in 1977, we were greatly honoured by the following message which was sent to the ship on our last homeward voyage.

Queen Elizabeth is extremely sad to know that Windsor Castle, which she had been so proud to launch and in which the Queen Mother has always taken such a close interest, is making her final voyage, thereby bringing an end to a wonderful tradition of 120 years of passenger mail service to South Africa. Queen Elizabeth knows well with what distinction Windsor Castle represented the Union Castle Line and what acclaim she received whenever she sailed. I convey to you all my very warmest good wishes.

The next stop in this epic 50-year period was Kilve. I have led a charmed life and been blessed with many things and I couldn't begin to recount for you all the birthday presents which I have received in these last 50 years. However, one sticks out in my mind the flagpole! Knowing of my predilection for anything royal and patriotic, Neville, and our then manager, Derek, decided that a flagpole would be the ideal present and with our staff of the "Hood" very kindly giving me a Union Jack as their birthday gift I was in "seventh heaven" and in no time at all the local builder was instructed to erect the pole and to my knowledge the flag has been flying there ever since. It was there proudly displayed when Prince Edward came to Kilve. En route to attend some duties at Kilve Court, we not only flew the flag but "The Hood Arms" workforce were all present to give him a right royal welcome as he turned into Kilve Court's drive.

Mind you, this was by no means the highlight of our "Royal associations" "during our tenure at "The Hood". In 1988 on Monday 19th September to be exact, we were cordially invited to attend a reception at the Festival Hall in London. The occasion was an exhibition of paintings by the renowned artist Robert Heindal: an exhibition entitled "The Obsession of Dance". In her capacity as patron of the London City Ballet, the guest of honour at this private reception was to be HRH Diana, Princess of Wales. We had previously been invited to a similar reception when Princess Margaret was the honoured guest, but through business and other commitments we did not accept. (No offence meant I can assure you, but both Neville and I had met Princess Margaret before. Neville through his connections with the famous London store of Harvey Nichols, and myself through the "Edinburgh Castle", another ship on which I served, and which was launched by the Princess in 1947.)

Well, we didn't need to be asked twice! The thought of being with Princess Diana was one of overwhelming joy. And so it turned out. Not only was it a lovely reception and the paintings wonderful, but we spent some considerable time talking to the Princess herself. Whilst Neville did much of the talking, I was transfixed by the beauty of not just the Princess herself and the charm she so wonderfully radiated, but also her engagement ring! Outstanding. It was a lovely and memorable occasion and we still remember to this day the Princess's parting words "We really have talked rather a lot and we are supposed to be looking at pictures too, so you'll have to excuse me!"

And perhaps the best is yet to come! For here we are in Golden Jubilee Year 2002. I just can't believe that 50 years have flown by since the day I sat down with the rest of the family and friends watching those flickering coronation pictures on that little television set.

And why do I say perhaps the best is yet to come? Well imagine my surprise when in February this year I received a letter from the Lord Lieutenant - Lady Gass inviting me to be one of Somerset's representatives at garden party to be given by Her Majesty at Buckingham Palace in July. So Neville and myself in best bib and tucker's are off to the palace. Some of you will, no doubt, be thinking that the Tower would be more appropriate!

I could never have imagined all those years ago whilst watching our little black and white television set that some 50 years later I would have such an honour to be invited to meet H.M. Queen Elizabeth in her Golden Jubilee year, not only representing Somerset but more especially Kilve.

Kevin Rogers was in the school art room in Oxford when a boy came in and said that the King had died. One of the other boys in the class immediately reacted and got to his feet and proclaimed 'God save the Queen'!

When King George VI died, I was teaching in Bristol. As I walked down the main corridor, the Head came out of her study to tell me of his death. I remember how shocked I felt, and how touched by her obvious sadness, particularly as she was American.

Bette Gill

FRANK'S STORY

by Brian West

It happened fifty years ago and yet I recall every detail of that December night as if it were yesterday.

As was common in those days, as a young man of 21 I lived with my mother. Our home was in Lower Morden, which was then a small village but is now, sadly, part of London's urban sprawl. The village, which at that time boasted a Butcher's shop, a Post Office and a Grocer's store, nestled quietly in a fold in the North Surrey Downs. The road past our home was the old route from London to the West Country and two old Coaching Inns set the village boundaries, 'The Woodstock' on the Western road and 'The George' on top of the hill towards London. The village Primary School, where I did my early learning sat next door to the 'George' and across the road was St. Lawrence Church where I was baptised.

That year of 1952 I had recently started work in the City and each morning I would leave home at about 7.30am and take the bus for the short journey to Morden, our nearest town. Morden's claim to fame was that it was the terminus of the Northern Line of the London Underground, affectionately known as 'The Tube'. Joining the train at the terminus I could usually get a seat which enabled me to read my newspaper on the 45 minute journey to Bank station and it was then only a short walk to my office. In the evening however, on my return journey, I could rarely get a seat and invariably reached Morden feeling very tired after a long day.

On my journey home that evening I had read in my newspaper an article about smog. It would seem that this was an unusual weather phenomenon, whereby a system called an 'inversion' trapped an oily black cloud with a dreadful smell of coal smoke and sulphur, close to the ground. Cold air could not rise above a belt of warmer air and in those days, before smokeless fuel, as people threw more coal on their fires to fight the cold, the situation just got worse.

That cold December evening, as I left the train and climbed the stairs to street level, the smog came swirling down to meet me and as I emerged from the station, engulfed me completely. Visibility was nil and I literally could not see my hand in front of me. Not sure that the buses were running I started the walk home, a distance of about one and a half miles and soon left the security of the station lights behind me.

I had walked only a short distance when I felt a tap on my shoulder and as I turned a soft voice asked "Excuse me Sir, may I walk with you for a while?" A young woman stood before me dressed in a woollen hat and heavy coat to guard against the winter chill. Despite the gloom I was struck by her beauty and particularly noticed her shining golden hair. It was late and there were few people about as we set off on our journey homewards. "My name is Frank" I said. "Short for Francis, of course". "And I am Emma" she said, "Short for Emmaretta"

We settled into conversation and before very long it seemed we had been friends for ever. We talked about our dreams and fears and I confided in her my hopes for the future. Emma was also 21 and she told me that she was a nanny looking after a young family in a large house in London. I told her about my family, that my father had died some years earlier and that I lived with my mother. It was only some time later that I recalled that she seemed reluctant to talk about her family but was only too willing to tell me about the children she looked after during the day.

The road home was through open country and the absence of street lights added to the darkness around us but somehow with Emma walking by my side my steps seemed lighter and I almost welcomed the smog as it cocooned us in our own little world. As we walked on I found myself growing closer to this stranger whom I had only recently met.

Suddenly, I was pushed sideways by a strong force and Emma and I fell into the hedgerow in a heap. At that instant a red double decker bus which I had not seen or heard came out of the mist and reared up over the pavement, passing over the very spot where only seconds earlier we had been walking. I held Emma close to me and I looked deep into her clear blue eyes which radiated a reassuring calm as I caught my breath from our narrow escape. Standing, I stretched out my hand and gently helped Emma to her feet. I was pleased when she did not let go and I could feel the warmth of her hand through her woollen glove. As we continued our walk home she left her hand in mine.

As we approached the rise above the village, I slowed my steps, knowing that we would shortly reach our homes. She had told me that she lived near the church and I assumed she meant in the large block of flats built some years earlier to accommodate people from inner London who had been 'bombed' out of their homes during the second world war. At the crossroads by the church, before I had a chance to ask her address, she kissed my cheek, said goodbye and disappeared into the mist. I was left to walk on alone, down the hill to the village where the lights were barely visible in the ever increasing gloom.

For the next three evenings as I left the station, I was again met by the smog. I looked around for Emma and waited for several trains to arrive - but to no avail. On the fifth evening a breeze had picked up during the day and the smog had blown away. The buses were back to their normal schedule and each evening, as I journeyed home on the number 93 I sat by the window on the upper deck, searching for any sign of Emma. I walked around to the flats where I thought she lived, quizzing the residents but no one seemed to know her. The days turned into weeks and then months and it was soon Spring but I still could not get Emma out of my mind.

My mother and I regularly attended the Sunday service at St. Lawrence's Church and afterwards I ran a bible class for the local teenagers. At that time we had a new vicar who was keen to make improvements to the old church. He suggested to me that I should ask my class to assist with clearing up the churchyard which had suffered many years of neglect. The teenagers were keen to be involved and we agreed to start the job the following Saturday morning. We cut the grass and then started to tackle the dense undergrowth at the back of the church. I was busily hacking away with a hand scythe when the blade hit on stone and as I pulled the brambles away I saw it was an old tombstone. Brushing away the debris my blood ran cold as I read the old inscription "Emmaretta Ellen Hayward - died, June 3rd 1852- age 21" and below were carved the words "She gave her life so that others might live".

As my mother was always overly concerned for my safety I had not mentioned to her the incident with the bus in the smog and neither had I told her anything of my meeting with Emma and the effect that it had on me. When I returned home from my labour in the churchyard, however, she could see that I was distressed. Over our evening meal I told her, for the first time, the full story and what had happened to me that day. When I mentioned the name on the tombstone she gave me a long hard look and we finished our meal in silence.

After dinner, my mother beckoned me to follow her into the study where she took down her old family bible that for as far back as I could remember had been used to prop up a shelf. My mother was obviously preoccupied and we barely noticed the shelf collapse and the books tumble to the floor.

She turned several pages and searched across, following her family tree. Silently she pointed to an old inscription, which read. "Emmaretta Ellen Hayward, born 1831 - died 1852" and it went on to explain that she had tragically lost her life saving the children in her care from a fire which had completely destroyed their family home.

I never saw Emma again.

The mists of time surround us
and we are not aware
of Spirits watching over us,
observing as we share
our lives with other living souls
who do not always care,
then they reach out and touch us...
and we know they are there.

Anon.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

by Rachel Pearse

What a thing to do to someone!

"Just a little piece, needn't be too long, with a Jubilee theme."

It didn't seem too daunting a task, but when I sat down to begin the memories came flooding out in no particular order and swamped me entirely. Faces and names, people and places half forgotten jumped out of my subconscious and seemed to laugh at my discomfort. So here goes!

The Silver Jubilee was a major event from the word go. Every street, road and avenue in Watchet had plans for a party, and the competition was huge. Everyone wanted their street to be the best decorated, their food to be the most delicious, their ideas to be the most envied. There were plans for fancy dress parties, space hopper races, and disco dancing; there was no other topic of conversation or argument for weeks before.

Our street party was held in the new Youth Centre. The question had arisen fairly early in the planning stage, "What happens if it rains?" The thought was too terrible to contemplate. All that red, white and blue bunting hanging limp and dripping, all the food that had been lovingly prepared and beautifully presented awash in puddles of rain water, it couldn't be allowed to happen. So volunteers were sent to book the venue, with threats of dire consequences if the plans to safeguard our party leaked out to any of the other streets.

As it turned out, the weather was fine, the decorations were amazing and the food was wonderful. Every household brought something and the weeks of planning were well worth it. The age range was huge, but the older members joined in the dancing and games with just as much gusto as the younger; it was difficult to decide who was setting the pace at times! A visit from the town crier and members of the council held things up for a while, but all the school age children received a commemorative crown as a gift from the town, so we tried not to let it spoil things!

The evening was harder. After spending the afternoon and early evening partying for England, some of us broke off to make our way to Dunkery to see the beacons lit. Our journey was hard: the sheer number of cars meant that we had a long trek before we could begin the ascent. What was usually a pleasant stroll turned into a major navigational problem with people swarming up the hill, the paths blocked at intervals with people stopping to catch their breath. A tired, grumpy four year old made the going tougher, but we were determined that she should see the view from the top. We were not disappointed. The beacon fire was raging and cast a glow over the faces of all the people standing gazing across the channel or over the hills, trying to count how many fires were visible from our high vantage point. The whole hillside, the whole town, probably the whole country seemed to glow that night, with an almost tangible sense of happiness and pride.

*To Watchet port there sailed a ship,
A Royal sloop was she
That bears aboard as gay a hoard
As ever set to sea.*

Take that bemused look off your face, all will be revealed! It comes as quite a shock when you put a number on the years: 25 years ago we celebrated the Silver Jubilee, but even longer ago I was involved in celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the Girl Guide movement. I was in Kingfisher patrol, 1st Watchet Girl Guides, and we were all delighted and pleased to learn that we had been chosen to take part in this huge event.

The verse above was the first of a poem written especially for the occasion and tells the story of a battle between Roundheads and Cavaliers that took place at Sedgemoor. We were to stage a mock battle whilst this epic poem was read out by a Queen's Guide from Williton, as part of a pageant to be staged somewhere near Bristol. Can you imagine how we felt when we learned that we were to be Roundheads? How we envied the girls chosen to wear the flamboyant costumes of the Cavaliers, with brightly coloured breeches, big hats with feathers, silver buckles and very impressive false beards. Our costumes were made in several shades of drab, black boots and papier mache helmets. But we carried it off with a great deal of enjoyment, presenting wooden blunderbusses with all the precision of a very poorly trained army and trying to mime the cannon shots in sync with the sound effects produced somewhere out of sight of the audience. I wish I had been a spectator for the rest of the pageant, but we were hurried off to the waiting buses and the journey home.

One thing comes to mind after describing these two very different celebrations: the planning, organisation and production of any event, no matter how great or small, means nothing without the people. A sense of community is a wonderful thing, it should be nurtured and allowed to bloom, for what use is a party with no-one to share or a pageant with no audience.

Kilve News announced the Jubilee Party in the May 2002 issue.

MONDAY JUNE 3RD

THE VILLAGE CELEBRATION

AT KILVE COURT

7.30PM TO 1.00 AM

ENTERTAINMENT

BUFFET SUPPER

DANCING

RAFFLE

The Big E

-a 2002 word story

by Olaf Chedzoy

I'm Tom. I live near the middle of Kilve. I'm proud to live in this active village, so I was doubly pleased to read in Old Rob's Almanack that there would be a visitor of great importance to Kilve in early June, a person strongly associated with the letter E.

I know that many of you take little notice of Old Rob's comments, but some of his predictions do come true. For instance, last year he said that there would be heavy traffic on the A39 in the summer, and he was absolutely right.

But I digress. I kept that bit of information about the letter E at the back of my mind through those dismal days of January and February, and by early March I still had no inkling who it might be, or why, or exactly where or when. Then I read in Kilve News that the village was going to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee on June 3rd at Kilve Court.

Suddenly, it all clicked into place. Early June became June 3rd, the Jubilee Celebrations became the reason why, and of course, it would happen at Kilve Court. There would be a very important visitor to our patriotic celebrations on that day.

I was determined to use my powers of deduction on any possible hint as to the identity of the visitor. I've often thought my second name should have been Hercule.

It was on the fifteenth of March that I was in the Post Office Stores when a large black Daimler came from Sea Lane and stopped across the road (you know, where the yellow lines used to be). I particularly noticed it because it was clean and sparkling. Anyway, a well-groomed, dark-suited, white-shirted man walked briskly across the road to the shop. His eyes assessed the range of goods in the shop before he selected a copy of The Times, and approached Jackie to pay for it. Actually, he was quite a long time talking to her, and I wondered if he was trying to chat her up, but these days I'm a bit hard of hearing. Anyway, even if he was, he obviously didn't succeed, because Jackie sent him on his way with a copy of Kilve News. But what I heard of his voice told me that he was well-spoken with almost perfect Queen's English. He placed his newspaper in a posh black briefcase bearing a coat of arms.

Although I'm not especially nosy, I was going to ask Jackie about him, but she was called to the phone, and Ian came out to serve me. I wouldn't have thought any more about it, but for what happened afterwards.

A week or so later, I made my way to Kilve beach. Being the end of March, the spring tides were very high, and there was Will Flood, who knows all there is to know about the beach. He wasn't on his own, he had a rather portly gentleman with him, and was explaining the shore to him. I didn't like to approach too near and intrude, but he was explaining the way the water was churning around at the entrance to the Pill. Now, as I've said, my hearing isn't that good, but I know for certain that I heard Will say, "In Kilve, you don't often see that, Eddie George.

So that was my first real hint. Eddie George obviously knew someone from Kilve, and there would therefore be a strong possibility that he could be the surprise visitor. After all, Eddie does start with E. As far as I knew, no-one else knew of his association with Kilve (apart from Will Flood, of course).

Then at the beginning of April, I just happened to be passing the Hood, and one doesn't like to be rude and pass it without looking in now and again. I had a nice little chat with Brian about all sorts of things without solving any of the world's problems completely. But as I was finishing my drink and putting my coat on, Brian had a phone call. Someone wanted some rooms for bed and breakfast. I saw Brian flip over the pages of his diary, and I distinctly saw the June page.

"Yes," he said, "Two rooms for the 3rd." Pause as he looked at the open page. "Yes, I can do that for you." Then some words at the other end. "All right then," he said, "What name is it for?". Then another pause while he listened and obviously repeated what the other person had said. "Taylor. T-A-Y-L-O-R. And what initial, please?" I know he asked for an initial, but he did get the full name. "Yes, I've got that. Taylor, Elizabeth. Two rooms for the 3rd."

The funny thing was that Brian didn't seem to connect. Elizabeth Taylor coming to spend a night in Kilve, and he isn't excited! Well, I know she's a lot older than Brian - well, she used to be older than me, but these days, she's apparently younger - but doesn't he realise? He could put a plaque up 'Elizabeth Taylor slept here' or something like that!

But Elizabeth does start with the letter E. So who was coming on June 3rd? Eddie George or Elizabeth Taylor?

It was well into May when I saw that shiny black Daimler again, and as before, it stopped outside the Post Office Stores. I was standing by the car park entrance, but thought I'd better slip into the Post Office as quickly as possible to see who this chap was, and what he was doing in Kilve..

Unfortunately, age has also affected my turn of speed, and by the time I got into the Post Office, he'd had a few minutes to talk to Ian and get his purchases. I bought a chocolate bar, so that Ian wouldn't think me too inquisitive, but by the time I got out, my quarry was already getting in his car. As he did so, he dropped 2 piece of orange paper. I suppose I could have stopped him, but (trying to keep the village tidy) I just picked up the piece of paper. I immediately recognised it as torn from Kilve News (the same colour as the March issue Jackie had given him previously), and on the back some notes had been made. He must have made them after exploring and assessing the place, and found it very suitable for visiting.

The penny might not have dropped then, except for the fact that on the BBC that evening Buckingham Palace had indicated that the Queen might make one or two unannounced drop-in visits to local celebrations somewhere in the realm. It was then I realised the importance of the black Daimler, the Coat of Arms on the briefcase and why he had Kilve News, and why he'd gone down Sea Lane and why he was so well-spoken and well-dressed. He was checking up on Kilve and what's more, I reckon he'd be bound to recommend it as a great place to come. So was the Queen coming here on June 3rd?

Another Elizabeth, with an even bigger E!

I wanted to spread this information around the village so that everyone would be prepared, but when I told my friends at the Hood at a Thursday evening gathering, they laughed at the idea of Eddie George, they were hugely amused by the thought of Elizabeth Taylor and just didn't cotton on to the idea of Queen Elizabeth coming to Kilve.

But I knew that come June 3rd, they'd really acknowledge my deductive powers. The Palace was keeping quiet, Elizabeth Taylor might have requested no publicity (well, I suppose she just might!), and perhaps Eddie George had heard of the oil hidden in Kilve Beach, and thought it could be used to beat inflation, but had better keep quiet about it.

The Golden Jubilee Celebration Day of June 3rd duly arrived, and I still couldn't make out which of them it would be. But by the evening, we would all know.

However, it didn't turn out quite like that. I was just passing the Hood at lunch-time, so I dropped in for a quick drink. After all, one must toast the Queen on her Golden Jubilee. Brian was taking a phone call.

"Yes, I understand. You won't be able to come. Thank you very much for letting me know, Miss Taylor."

I have to say that I felt a pang of disappointment. I would have liked to see what she looked like in the flesh, so to speak. But never mind, it must be either the inflation beater man, or Her Majesty herself.

At that moment, Will Flood came in to the Hood with the friend that I'd seen him with in March. He saw me, and came over, and introduced him. "Hallo Tom," he said, "meet my friend George." I was gobsmacked. After all, you don't introduce someone by his surname, especially when he's a Sir. I looked again at his friend and saw that indeed it wasn't Eddie George, and realised that George was his Christian name.

I thought back to the conversation by the Pill, and realised that although I'd heard every word, I hadn't got the meaning right. I should have understood it as "In Kilve, you don't often see that eddy, George."

I was disappointed, but from the three possibilities, it still left the really important one. The Queen would come to Kilve Court. The more I thought about it, the more I realised that I should have understood this all along. Even the BBC implied that the Queen might drop-in, and that suggested a helicopter visit. And a few years ago, Prince Edward had used a helicopter when visiting Kilve Court.

As soon as I got to Kilve Court on that afternoon, I looked at the field used last time, and it was deserted. I prepared myself to be the only one who knew she was going to visit us and I would meet her. But half past seven went by and no sound of any aircraft, and then I remembered that Prince Edward arrived by car and left by helicopter. I reckoned that she might have got mixed up in some of the Butlin's traffic, but the road was clear except for a smart BMW which slowed right at the entrance. The driver lowered his window and asked, in a heavy French accent, "Zere is a party 'ere? I can join party?"

I don't know what you'd have said, but I was hoping to greet the Queen of England, and here was some French bloke wanting to gatecrash our celebrations. I shook my head, "Not really," I said, "only a small group of friends. I should go on to Williton or Minehead if I were you."

"Oui," he replied. "Zank you ver' much." Then he fished in his pocket and pulled out an envelope, blank on the outside. "But 'ere is my best wishes." And he drove off.

I opened the envelope, and inside was a slip of paper bearing the words,

*When the seagulls fly high over the village
then the people will enjoy the present.*

I looked blankly at the piece of paper, trying to understand the deep brooding (some unkind people might say incomprehensible) philosophy behind that simple sentence.

Then I realised that I'd heard words before which make this sort of sense. They were uttered by that great footballer, Eric Cantona. Even as I remembered his name, I realised that Eric started with E. A very significant E indeed. Eric Cantona was looking for somewhere to join a party, and I'd sent him away from Kilve!

I didn't go to the pub that Thursday evening. They'd have laughed at the fact that no-one of importance came. I could have stood that, but I just couldn't face telling them I was actually right, but I'd sent him away. I didn't even get his autograph to prove it.

THE LABRADORS OF KILVE

by Georgina West

One day, whilst on his morning walk

Wellie listened to the talk

Of celebrations now in hand

And what the village here has planned

To celebrate a strange event

That nothing to his senses meant.

As he walked around the bend

Wellie spotted George, his friend,

"Hi there Wellie, how are you?"

"Fine George, fine - hope you are too".

Their masters stopped to have a chat

Said Wellie, "George, did you hear that?"

"Listen now! Those words again

Much talked about between our men.

'Golden Jubilee' - what does that mean to you?"

"Sorry, Wellie, I can't help, I haven't got a clue.

My man is tugging at my lead, I'll really have to go
We'll have to ask another Lab, try Jacob, he may know"

Later on, in their free time when they could not be seen
They met just by the corner and walked to 'Albertine'.
First they barked, then gave a scratch
And Jacob came to lift the latch.
"Come in boys, the folks are out
Sorry there's no food about"

To Jacob they explained their plight
And Jacob said "OK, -- Alright
I think a meeting we should call
Perhaps behind the village hall
I'll post a message on our tree

A place where everyone can see"
"Not too high, quite near the ground
The word will quickly get around
I'll speak with Bonnie at the shop
She'll bring some cake and soda pop".
The news soon travelled down the line
On Kilve's own Labrador grapevine

The venue set, the day and date,
They all agreed to meet at 'eight'.
The Edkins Labs walked down the lane

Said Joker - "Jet,- this is a pain

I didn't know it was so far

It seems much nearer in the car."

On meeting at the village hall each gave the secret sign

That marks them out as Labradors to others of their line.

The boys all barked and rompsed around

The girls sat quietly on the ground.

Glen began to hoop and holler 'Til Honey grabbed him by the collar

"Behave yourself and don't be bad or I shall have to tell your dad"

The Jets were chatting by the wall

Said Sharp - "You guys do have a ball

I'm new here but I'd like to stay

'Cos you boys sure know how to play.

Said Stephens - "Boy, I know the score

You stick with me, now shake a paw.

They exchanged ideas and speculation

On what could be this 'Celebration'

"Can we eat it? --- Is it a cat?"

"Now George, that's enough of that!"

The boys all said "Hey, what a crack!"

And patted George upon the back.

Said Jess and Tansy - "Oh - good heavens!"

"Boys, behave!"- Said Suzie Evans.

Ben now barked for their attention

"I think the girls have information. "

They found their places, nudged and licked,

Legs akimbo, ---- ears a-pricked.

Lucia said -- "Friends, I've found out

I now know what it's about".

"Kilve, our little village, among these hills so green

Has someone ruling over it and she is called 'The Queen'

Fifty years ago in June, I think the 3rd's the date

Well, that's the Golden Jubilee, a day to celebrate.

She is a lady, strong and kind and I have heard it said

That when she settles down at night, her dogs sleep on her bed!

We could send a message to let her know that we

Are proud to celebrate with her, The Golden Jubilee"

One Lab had some paper and another had a pen

So they put their heads together and they wrote it there and then.

Then they found a puddle and in it dipped a paw

Until this special message, each signature it bore

They popped it in the post box and then went home to bed

Very pleased with their night's work and this is what it said:

GREETINGS TO YOUR MAJESTY

ON YOUR GOLDEN DAY IN JUNE

WE'LL BARK THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AND WE'LL WAG OUR TAILS IN TUNE.

*WE ARE YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANTS, AS LOYAL AS YOU CAN GET THE LABRADORS OF KILVE,
MA'AM FROM WESTERN SOMERSET.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH II
GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR, 2002