

# **Recollections of life in Quinton, Queen's Coronation in June 1953**

Notes from a conversation between  
Fran, Connie and Syd,  
with Kathey Bailey and Graham Saunders  
on Wednesday 3rd May 2023.

(Recorded with their permission)

With special thanks to Fran, Connie and Syd for  
continuing to share their unique views and memories of  
living in Quinton village.

The Queen's Coronation took place on Tuesday June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1953. The weather in Quinton that day was remembered as being rainy, although there were periods of better weather during the proceedings.

It was an eventful period for the Village. Earlier in May, the 1953 May Day celebrations had taken place at Quinton Rising, with Connie Piercy being crowned as May Queen. Mr Syd Piercy Snr was Town Crier, and Connie was crowned by Ena Rooks.



A substantial amount of work went into these events, from detailed dresses and costumes and substantial flower bouquets, to catering for what was a very good attendance. A large number of children participated too. Some excellent photos are available of this event which looked like it enjoyed dry weather. It's a testament to Quinton villagers that in the passing 70 years these traditions, albeit in modern form, still form part of the village calendar.



Boys L-R Frank Creed, Graham Rooks, Malcolm Rooks



Town Crier - Mr Piercy, Frank Creed, Malcolm Rooks in Elizabethan costume



L-R Susan Tyson, garland carried by Doreen Raine and Fran Piercy, Carol Kightly on right. And Morris Dancers in the background



L-R Paul, Ann Piercy, Graham Rooks, Ena Rooks, Doreen Raine, Connie Rooks, Trevor Adams, Fran Piercy, Judy Day

Plans were set out for the village which anticipated an exciting day.

45 copies of the programme were produced - a good number expecting good attendance (a copy is on the Village history site).

The organising committee was the Quinton Social Club, sometimes referred to for the event as the 'Coronation Committee'. Some of their records exist and are on the Historical Quinton pages on the Parish Council website.

The running order comprised:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 9.30        | Church service led by Canon Hopkin,<br>Fran possibly played the organ                                 |
| 10.30-12.30 | Football and cricket  |
| 12.30-9.30  | Skittling for a Pig   |
| 2.30        | Children's fancy dress  |
| 2.45        | Children's sports - events included 50 yard flat,<br>egg and spoon, wheelbarrow race, flowerpot, sack |
| 4.30        | Tea and presentation of Coronation mugs   |
| 5.30        | Girl Guides' sketch   |
| 6.00        | Children sports final and prizes (the sixpence)   |
| 7.00        | Obstacle race - men   |
| 8.00        | WI sketch   |
| 9.00        | Fancy dress parade - ladies and gents   |
| 9.30        | Dancing and bonfire 'etc'   |

Refreshments were made available from 8.30pm onwards. These may have included fish paste sandwiches and hot dogs. There were no special plates and serviettes for the 1953 event.

There was only one television in the village owned by the Wilsons who lived in the Rectory (Mr Wilson worked at the electric company) so there was limited live news of the Coronation proceedings. There also was only one telephone in the village at the time, at the home of the Hensmans.

'Skittling for a Pig' was an event keenly contested by some villagers, where the winning score at skittles won a donated young pig which could be fattened up by the winner. It was a common event to hold. The young pig offered was usually present at the event. Gentleman paid 6d (old sixpence, 2.5p) for 3 balls (these may have actually been wooden cheeses) but ladies were only charged 3d (1p) for 3 balls!

The WI sketch/play was the main event in the proceedings. Fran, Connie and Syd's mum was in it, also Mrs Mills, Doreen's mum too, and the play was called 'Granny's 100'. It was a proper play, acted out on a little stage with everyone squeezed up very close in a packed schoolroom.

Although it was very wet at times, some races and activities did take place outside.

One lady resident was out on the village green during events wearing a pair of very large knickers with a Union Jack sewn on the bottom - this wasn't universally appreciated!

As well as Mum being in the play, she also helped with teas etc. The Newcombes were present, Peter Newcombe with his sister Renee, the Frosts too including Derek. Doreen latterly had contact with Renee but it stopped after she moved down to Kent. The Cooks attended. Hilary was their eldest, they later moved to Hartwell. Mr Gawthrop would also have been there, who gave the family a home when they came to Quinton.

Some events were held on the Green but when it rained they went to the schoolhouse. No-one was living there so access was open to all the rooms.

There's a strong memory of everyone being crowded into the old Schoolroom with its very dangerous chairs. Two big pictures of the King & Queen were on the wall, it was possibly Edward VII (1901-1910).

The WI's play was remembered most.

Fran, Connie and Syd's dad, Mr Piercy was also very active with events. Records of the meetings held at the time exist, more in note form than a diary. Mrs Turney was also very active in the Social Club, she was an organiser by nature and is often remembered for her excellent gingerbread.

Both Fran and Connie were alive at the King's coronation in 1937 but too young to remember. Syd wasn't born, but he nevertheless has a commemorative spoon! Fran might still have her commemorative mug.

The Social Club Records' minutes show that building up to the coronation, plans were discussed at length, a comment being that the 'balance sheet had been discussed without achieving a great deal'! Minutes from June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1953 post-coronation only refer to appreciating Alf Sharp's generosity regarding a prize of 6d (old sixpence, 2.5p) to every child in the fancy dress but with no other comments. Most comments were about whist drives!

For the fancy dress, Fran recalls wearing a long pink skirt, but little recollection otherwise. Doreen also was all dressed up. The Pig winner is not known and wasn't really of interest to the children. It may though have been won by the Mills, who were very competitive, or by Bill Maule.

Alf Sharp's wife was a big cake maker, making table creams (blancmange style and banana flavoured) for events and Alf as well was an active organiser. He was the farm manager at Turneys for a long time, also involved with Chapel and often 'carried his head on one side'. They lived at West Hall since the turn of the century, retired and then moved down to near the Post Box. They had come to Quinton in the early 1900s.

There were a number of Quinton Green participants: the Cores and Allens were there, Nellie Halford and sister, then Cooks at the other end of the terraces. The Sharps lived at one end there after moving out of Manor Cottages, Mrs Newcombe, Mr & Mrs Raines, the Hensmans would have been there too, Mrs Turney who was on the PCC obtained the key to open the Schoolhouse for shelter for the coronation event. School Lane had no buildings beyond the School House - the Moore family lived in the School House but had moved out, hence it being available. They had had one daughter, Marjorie, a friend with Fran, Connie & Syd's younger sister Ann, but both sadly died very young. Some people were not involved in the celebrations by their own choice.

Thanks to Fran, Connie and Syd for going back so well in their memories, giving today's Quinton a special view of how the last Coronation was celebrated in the village.