



Coronation Celebrations in the Esk Valley

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On June 2nd 1953, the Coronation of Elizabeth II took place at Westminster Abbey in London. She was 25 years of age, the 39th monarch to be crowned at the Abbey, the setting for British coronations since 1066. Millions were able to watch the proceedings televised for the first time and it was a day of rejoicing and celebration across the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and the wider world. Local celebrations, presentations, parades and street parties took place across North Yorkshire including the Esk Valley and Danby area, where the History Tree had been standing for some 150 years, through the reigns of eight previous monarchs.

One thing the History Tree would have liked about the Coronation was the relentless rain that came with it! June 2nd was a notable day, not least due to the 50-mile an hour storm that rained on any planned local parades. But the spirit that made Britain great was not to be defeated and the celebrations went ahead.

A reporter from the Whitby Gazette toured the villages of the Esk Valley, stopping first at Egton. Coronation decorations festooning the village received a severe buffeting from the storm, but freshly out of a church service and now tucked up warm in the schoolroom, partaking of a sumptuous tea, were the parishioners. The

assembled children, adorned for the fancy dress parade, were taken by coach to the Tenants' Room at Egton Bridge, along with the decorated tractors, perambulators and bicycles, where judging took place. All 144 village children were presented with souvenir mugs and the day was rounded off with a memorable social evening.

The next stop was Glaisdale, where the village 'made merry' in the Robinson Institute. The sports activities were postponed and the children in fancy dress were in danger of being disappointed, until the decision to bring them and the decorated wheeled vehicles inside for judging was taken. The abandonment of the parade from the railway station was accepted philosophically, leaving outside the Master of the Glaisdale Hunt, Jim Winspear, who had arrived on his steed Robin Adair dressed as Winston Churchill, complete with authentic cigar – a brown paper-wrapped skittle. The ample tea was served with Coronation cake, and 156 souvenir mugs were presented to the children. The beacon lighting above Hall Farm was put off till Friday.

At Lealholm the fancy dress competition took place in the schoolroom, with 80 entrants, followed by ice-cream. Tea for children and parents was supplied in the Shepherd's Hall, with the elderly residents served in

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Nelson Hall, followed by a social evening. Three days later the Maypole dancing took place, when the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky and a colourful procession made its way from the village green and over the bridge. The sports were topped with a tug-of-war between married and single women, and after a great struggle the singletons were declared victors. A huge bonfire was lit, followed by a fireworks display.

Other villages celebrated in similar style. At Danby, prizes of Coronation souvenirs were given not only for costumes and decorated cycles but also for decorated houses and shop window displays. The day ended with a huge bonfire on the Howe and the discharge of colourful Coronation fireworks. Souvenirs in Fryup included walking sticks, tobacco, and tins of tea or chocolates with the Queen's portrait. Grosmont Coronation Committee hired a car to take the infirm folk to the Methodist schoolroom, where a television had been installed to show the ceremony, and the village jazz band played dressed in Union colours and kilts to cheer the drabness of the evening.

Goathland delayed the planting of a commemorative tree and installation of a bench but adorned tea-tables in the parish hall with flowers, flags and balloons. The children were presented with mugs, ice cream and an orange, while the local Country Dance Club gave a dancing display. Villagers at Littlebeck laid out a huge Union Flag measuring 30 feet by 16 feet from crepe paper once the weather improved, and gardens looked splendid planted in Union colours.

One beneficial spin-off from the Coronation was the distribution of thousands of acorns from mature oaks in Windsor Great Park to places around Britain and to Commonwealth countries, to be planted in parks, school grounds, cemeteries, private estates and gardens. These trees became known as Royal Oaks or Coronation Oaks and have added to the robustness and beauty of our countryside.

In 2017 the Queen became the first British monarch to celebrate a Sapphire Jubilee, commemorating 65 years on the throne. A remarkable achievement!



Find out more

A personal account of the Coronation -

<http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Coronation-1953/>

Fascinating glimpses of 1950s life and times in Coronation celebrations in a Yorkshire village -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HHzw5cJcPM>

Coverage of the Coronation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3HrsLeZJ_E



A celebratory Coronation mug