

Effingham Celebrations – the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902

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The Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902 prompted celebrations across the land, besides the major events taking place in London. Initially scheduled for 26 June, the ceremony had to be postponed when Edward was taken into hospital to be operated on for an abdominal cyst. It took place instead on 9 August. There is not much surviving material to tell us how Effingham celebrated the event, but Parish Council Minutes, newspapers and school records afford us a glimpse.

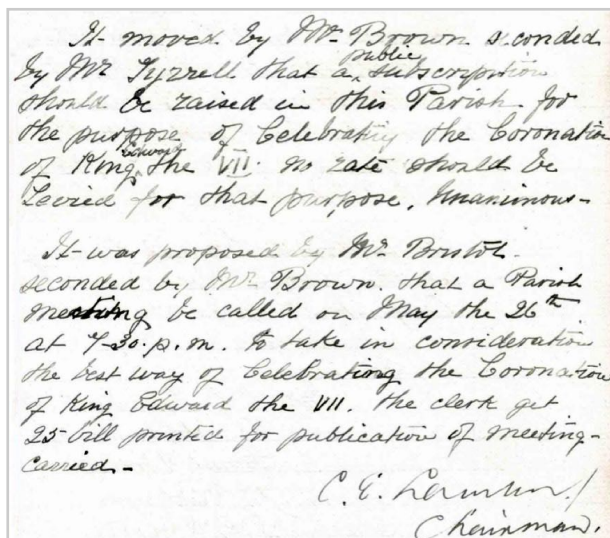
Introduction

Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901, whereupon her eldest son Edward immediately became King and Emperor of India.

The Coronation of Edward VII and that of his wife Alexandra was planned to take place in the following year, on 26 June 1902, and the nation's towns and villages accordingly made elaborate preparations for celebrating the event on that day.

Effingham celebrations

In Effingham the Parish Council began planning in May, committing to raising money for the event from the parishioners, but by voluntary subscription only:



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council on 17 May 1902:

‘It [was] moved by Mr Brown seconded by Mr Tyrrell that a public subscription should be raised in the Parish for the purpose of Celebrating the Coronation of King Edward VII. No rate should be levied for that purpose. Unanimous.

It was proposed by Mr Bristol seconded by Mr Brown that a Parish Meeting be called on May the 26th at 7.30 p.m. to take in consideration the best way of Celebrating the Coronation of King Edward the VII. The clerk [to] get 25 bill[s] printed for publication of meeting – carried.’

C. E. Lambert
Chairman

Figure 1 EPC Minutes of 17 May 1902.

Effingham's National School (later St Lawrence) was also making plans. The head teacher now was Mr William Blaxland, successor to Mr Jestyn Griffiths. In the school's log book he recorded on 16 June that the school would close for a week for the celebrations:

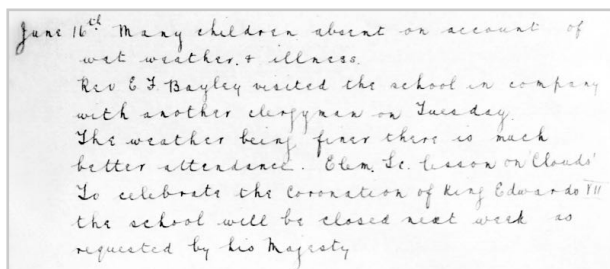


Figure 2 School log book entry 16 June 1902.

School Log Book 1862–1923; Entry on 16 June 1902:

‘Many children absent on account of wet weather & illness.

Rev E F Bayly visited the school in company with another clergyman on Tuesday. The weather being finer there is much better attendance. Elem. Sc. lesson on ‘Clouds’.

To celebrate the Coronation of King Edward VII the school will be closed next week as requested by his Majesty.’

Just a few days before the expected Coronation the local newspaper published details of the celebrations scheduled to take place in Effingham and nearby villages. For Effingham the published Programme was as follows:

Meat tea to the parishioners; sports and amusements; torchlight procession; fireworks and bonfire.

Then, to huge disappointment across the nation and, indeed, the Empire, it was officially announced on 24 June that the King had been taken ill with a peri-appendiceal abscess and had been operated on: the Coronation had been postponed.

Large delegations had arrived from abroad to take part in the formal proceedings and would now have to return home. In Britain there were many who had invested, and now stood to lose, significant amounts of money to rent sites along the processional route and to provide various services to the spectators. Later, very many cases would pass through the courts in pursuit of compensation for these losses.

In many towns and villages planned events were replaced or supplemented by hastily devised church services to pray for the King's recovery, and much pragmatism deployed to adapt arrangements to the changed circumstances. In other cases planned local celebrations were postponed altogether, as was the case in Effingham. Below is Mr Blaxland's log book entry on 30 June where he notes that all festivities had been postponed but the children had nevertheless been given 'cake & oranges etc'.

THE COMING CORONATION.
HOW SURREY WILL CELEBRATE THE EVENT.
THE PROGRAMMES OF FESTIVITIES.

LITTLE BOOKHAM.
Date.—June 26th and July 2nd.
Programme.—June 26th: Service in the Parish Church at 7 p.m. **July 2nd:** Fete in the Rectory grounds; cricket match for men and lads at 11 a.m.; music, sports, various amusements; bonfire, fireworks, fire balloons, etc.

GREAT BOOKHAM.
Date.—June 26th and July 2nd.
Programme.—Service in church on June 26th. **July 2nd:** Meat tea for the parishioners in Eastwick Park, followed by sports and various amusements, with torchlight procession in the evening; presentation of Coronation mugs to children.

EFFINGHAM.
Programme.—Meat tea to the parishioners; sports and amusements; torchlight procession; fireworks and bonfire.

LEATHERHEAD.
Programme.—Church services; children's procession, tea and presentation of mugs; sports and games for children; torchlight procession, with historical cars and costumes; bonfire and fireworks. **Old people's treat** on July 2nd.

Figure 3 Programmes for the local villages.

June 30th School re-opened but all festivities have been postponed through illness of his Majesty the King. distributed cake & oranges etc.

Figure 4 School log book entry 30 June 1902.

Special Coronation cups and plates had been obtained. Mr Blaxland recorded on 7 July that some of these had been distributed to the children:

July - 1902.
 7th School going on as usual with a good attendance. Miss Lightfoot sent coronation cups & plates for distribution among the children Tuesday afternoon

Figure 5 School log book entry 7 July 1902.

Nearby Ranmore provided an example of adapting activities to retain a degree of festivity, as seen in the cutting in Figure 6.

A new date was fixed for the Coronation – 9 August. For whatever reason, Effingham staged its own celebration a little earlier, on 31 July, as shown by the following entry in the Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 2 August:

The accounts of the Coronation Festivities held on the 31st of July was presented and passed at a General Meeting held previous to this meeting, and great credit was due to all Committees of the Coronation of the success of the Celebration.

C. E. Lambert
Chairman

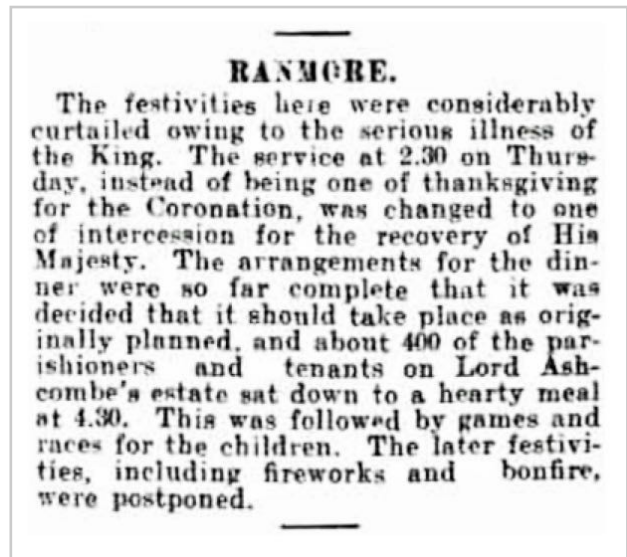


Figure 6 Ranmore adapts to the postponement.

Evidently things had gone well, although we do not know what took place; the festivities may have followed their original intended course or may have been re-planned.

The Coronation itself was a sumptuous affair, albeit scaled down to be an essentially national event rather than, as had been intended, a widely international one. At Westminster Abbey the service was watched by nearly ten thousand people and enlivened by a choir of over 400 singers and a full orchestra.



Figure 7 The Coronation Service as painted by Edwin Austin Abbey.

The Service was followed by a great Procession of State made by several tens of thousands of people.



Figure 8 King Edward VII in his Coronation robes.



Figure 9 Queen Alexandra in her Coronation robes.



Figure 10 Queen Alexandra at her Coronation.



Figure 11 The procession passing the construction site of The Old War Office building in Whitehall.



Figure 12 The procession 'passing along a busy London thoroughfare'.

We have no images of the Coronation celebrations in Effingham or nearby villages, but one photograph survives showing the festivities in Guildford, shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13 Guildford's Ram Corner with arch decorated for the Coronation.

The caption reads 'Showing the Triumphal Arch at Rams [sic] Corner, when King Edward VII was crowned'. Ram Corner referred to the intersection of Guildford High Street, Upper High Street and North Street; a public house named The Ram once stood there. At the top of the highly decorated arch are the words 'Happy and Glorious'. On the left of the photograph someone has written '1901', evidently in error.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: from the Minutes of Effingham Parish Council

Figures 2, 4, 5: from the school log book spanning 1862-1923, courtesy of St Lawrence School, Effingham

Figure 3: *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times*, 21 June 1902; by kind permission of Reach plc / *Mirrorpix*

Figure 6: *Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser*, 28 June 1902; by kind permission of Reach plc / *Mirrorpix*

Figure 7: from the Royal Collection, ID: 404612 (public domain)

Figure 8: replica of portrait by Luke Fildes; National Portrait gallery NPG 1691; licenced by Creative Commons 3.0

Figure 9: from the Royal Collection, ID: 404554 (public domain)

Figure 10: portrait by W and D Downey; licenced by Creative Commons 3.0

Figure 11: Ministry of Defence; public domain/MOD (Open Government License)

Figure 12: from *Wikipedia Commons*; author unknown (public domain)

Figure 13: from *The Guildford Dragon*; uploaded by Guildford historian David Rose in May 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ELHG expresses its gratitude to St Lawrence School for use of material from its log books.