

CORONATION PARTIES & PARADES

Iain Wakeford 2017



Soon after the death of King George VI, Woking Council (like every other local authority in the country), set up a 'Coronation Sub-Committee' to oversee celebrations in and around the town. They immediately authorised the purchase of 4,000 yards of bunting, thirty-six Union Jacks and other decorations (up to a maximum of £500) and the spending of between £250 and £300 on a firework display, but they couldn't initially reach agreement on a suitable souvenir for the school-children of the district. It wasn't until November 1952 that they agreed on providing a coronation mug for the estimated 9,000

It wasn't long, of course, before the estimated expenditure started to increase. The initial 4,000 yards of bunting was obviously not enough to line all the shopping streets and the park so the estimated cost gradually increased to £700 and then £850, with a further £300 to put it all up and take it all down afterwards – a task that on previous occasions the volunteers of the local fire brigade were happy to do free of charge! There was then the cost of programmes, badges for the officials, the hire of tables, chairs and lighting and the supply of a 'tannoy system' for the park.

children attending county and private schools in the district (at a cost to the ratepayers of £570), although this later increased to £750 when it was realised there was probably another 2,500 children that they hadn't accounted for!

At Brookwood Hospital each patient was given a 'Coronation Coin' in a gift of two shillings, with a 'cold chicken and ham' tea.

In addition to the mug, the children of Horsell School were also apparently given a 'pencil box and chocolate', whilst those in 'Goldsworth Road (West)' received 'propelling pencils' and a souvenir spoon at their party in June 1953. The elderly of that district were given tins of 'Coronation Tea', but they probably wished they lived in Poole Road or Cherry Street, where the residents had a 'Coronation Barrel of Beer' donated by Councillor Herbert Nind – the streets being described as 'bright and gay' with bunting, union jacks and 2,000 crepe paper flowers made by the housewives of the street.

It was reported that every customer of Robinson's in Chertsey Road was given a 'printed handkerchief as a Coronation souvenir', although their advertisement (right) in the local

A Children's Street Party in Westfield - one of many in the Woking District. The children and parents of Linden Way and St Martha's and Downsview Avenues enjoyed a 'sing-song' after their party

press suggests otherwise, as the 'handkerchiefs' (sic) were evidently on sale at between 1/6 and 2/11 each.

Woking Council initially thought of holding a 'central celebration' on the evening of the 2nd June, but soon realised that the lure of the wireless or television would put paid to that, deciding instead to encourage each ward to

CORONATION
SOUVENIRS OF A GREAT OCCASION

Be Patriotic!

<p>HEAD SQUARES OR NECKERCHIEFS Wear one of these in Rayon, crepe or soft Georgette. Depicting the procession in lovely soft colourings. From 8/11 to 45/-</p> <p>HANDKERCHIEFS Inexpensive souvenirs of the great occasion with pictures of Her Majesty in colours. Soft Crepe from 2/6 to 4/11 each Irish Linen and Lawn with Jacks and L.R. embroidered designs from 1s to 1/11 each</p> <p>HAIR RIBBONS For the children. Depicting the procession with Golden Coach, Turpin's Flag and God Save The Queen. 15" x 7/4) 2d. Tri-colours 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 7/4, 8/4, 9/4, 10/4, 11/4, 12/4, 13/4, 14/4, 15/4</p>	<p>WOVEN PHOTOGRAPH OF HER MAJESTY Mounted complete in light oak frame. A souvenir of quality and charm. Size 6 1/2" x 9", 6/11 each We also have Needlecases and Manicure Scissors and File in cases for presentation souvenirs.</p> <p>CORONATION TABLECLOTHS Heavy quality Spun Rayon depicting Royal Procession in colours. Celebrate the occasion with one for Lunch or Tea. Size 57" x 93", 45/6 each</p> <p>DECORATIONS, UNION JACKS To fly from home. All wool bunting in various sizes: 1 1/2, 2, 3 and 4 yards—also cotton bunting in fensons. Red, White or Blue. 36" wide, per yard 2/6</p>
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Robinsons SHOPPING CENTRE, WOKING

organise their street parties and other events on the Tuesday to Friday evenings, with a concluding day of celebrations on Saturday 6th in Woking Park.

On the newly constructed Maybury Estate the residents had been planning for the Coronation for almost as long as the Council and in November 1952 held a dance at the Lion Works to help raise funds. Tenants pledged to donate 3d a week and by January 1953 £30 had been raised towards their target of £200. On the morning of the Coronation there was a fancy dress parade followed by sports. At midday the children had tea with games and entertainment in the afternoon and fireworks in the evening.

At St John's and Sutton Green (and no doubt elsewhere) there was 'Coronation TV' for the elderly, whilst at Byfleet and West Byfleet on the Wednesday the recreation grounds were used to host old people's teas and children's

At Chobham a 'fanfare of trumpets by the Chobham Ex-Service Men's Band heralded the opening of the Chertsey Road Ward festivities, but the party for the children of Delta, Beta and Chertsey Roads at Chobham was nearly spoilt by rain until E P Cheeseman and Sons, Builders, came to the rescue and allowed the use of their premises.

The Rose Cottage Laundry appears to have been the setting for the Horsell Moor party, with entertainment after the tea provided by members of staff.

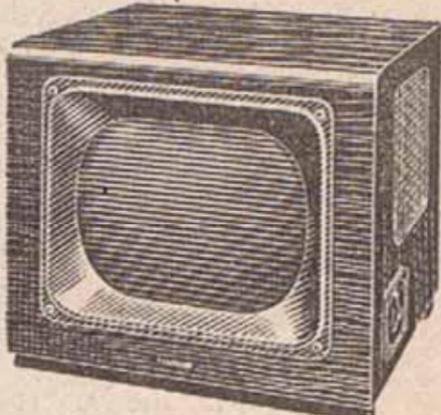
Residents in Knaphill enjoying their Coronation Tea.



A

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parties. At West Byfleet the ladies of the WI organised a poetry competition, with entertainment afterwards from their 'Dramatic Section' - the Knaphill WI also providing the entertainment at the old folks party at the

Methodist Church Hall on the Friday evening with a presentation afterwards of 'tins of tea' to the oldest lady and gentleman from the village! The old folk of Old Woking had a 'sing-song' after their tea at the St Peter's Hall in the

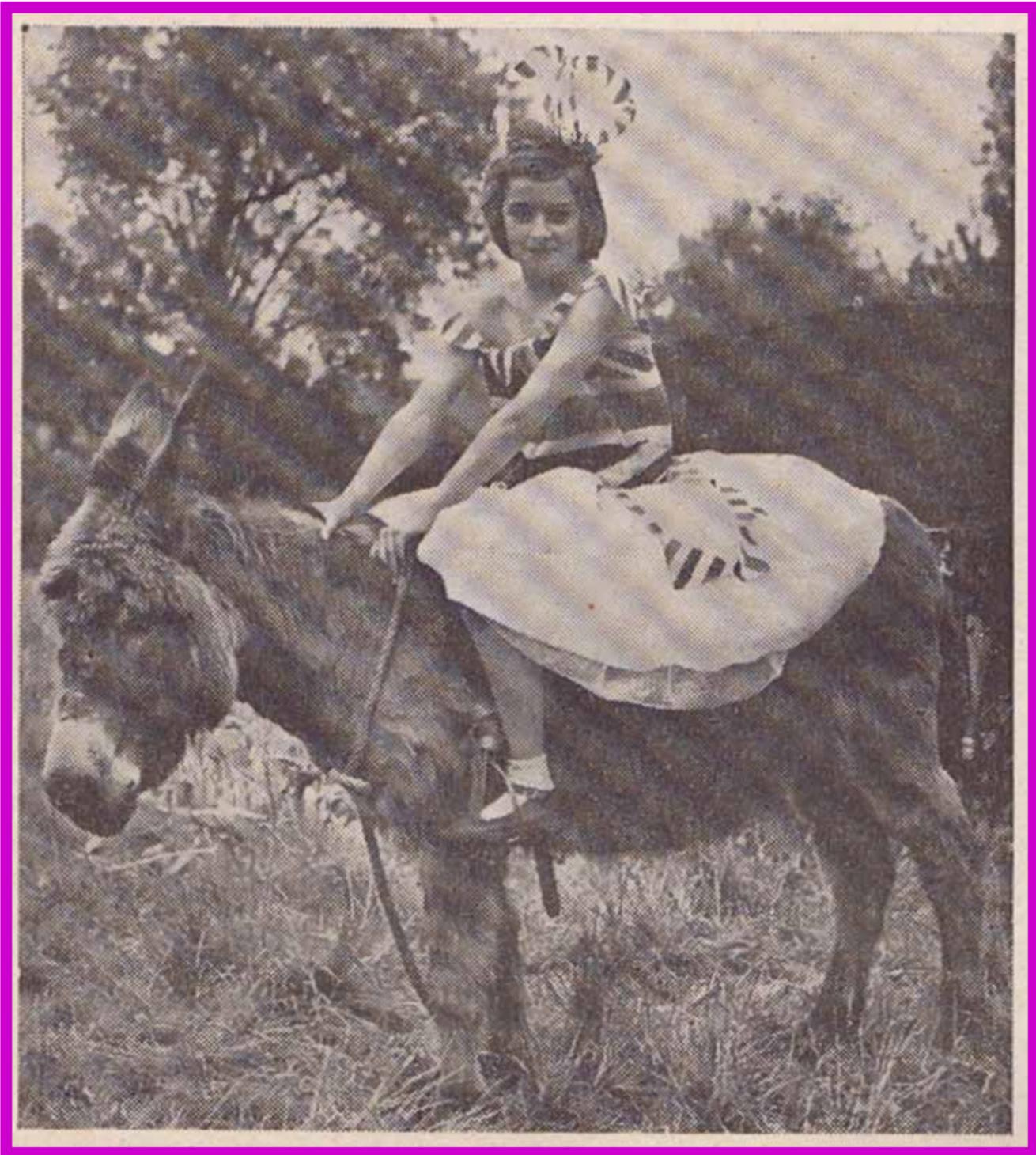
village with other pensioner's teas taking place in Horsell, and at the St Michael's Hall at Sheerwater.

Also on the LCC estate, up to a hundred children enjoyed a 'cruise along the Basingstoke Canal' in a barge placed at the disposal of the Sheerwater Community Association by Mrs J Marshall, the general manager of the New Basingstoke Canal Company.



Fancy dress parades seemed to be the main attraction during the week, although on the Maybury Estate they also had a variation on the 'fancy-dress' theme with a 'best decorated house' competition (above). In Vale Farm Road and Oaks Road their street party included 'Smoky' the donkey (right), giving rides to the children - but not until after he had managed to escape his tether and gallop off down Goldsworth Road (with a number of cyclists in hot pursuit), only to be cornered in a garden in Mabel Street!

In Old Woking the children of Gloster Road enjoyed a large 'two-tier' Coronation Cake and



On the Friday evening Woking Working Men's Club they apparently feasted on 'scores of jellied eels', whelks, meat pies, iced cakes and ice cream, followed by a concert, whilst Friday night was also declared 'Sheerwater Night' with seventeen local young ladies competing to be the 'Coronation Queen' – Mrs M M Levi

(aged 25) gaining the 'freedom of Sheerwater' for a year with extra gifts from several local firms. There was also a 'sketch' performed by members of the Sheerwater and Old Woking Community Associations entitled 'Good Neighbours'.

'120 bottles of pop', supplied by the landlord of the Queen's Head public house, whilst at Nursery Road and St Hilda's Close in Knaphill it took two people to carry the cake which at the end of the evening was distributed amongst all the houses.



In Kingfield Road everyone was deemed winners as all the costumes were 'so good, prizes were awarded to all entrants', although at the Hoebridge and Elmbridge Estate's fancy-dress parade the first prize went to a young man called Ronald Stacey, dressed as Winston Churchill in a black suit and top hat (he also taking first prize in the main central Woking celebrations too).

Sports took place at Chobham and St Johns, but the main sporting events were reserved for the Coronation Celebrations in Woking Park on the Saturday when there was a 'cavalcade of sport' with athletics, bowls, boxing, cycle-speedway, fencing, pigeon racing, swimming and even water-polo all taking place – with a

At St John's over seventy prizes were awarded for various sports before a tea was held in the Memorial Hall, with pastries, pop and paper hats (as well as a Coronation mug, sweets and an orange as the children left the hall).

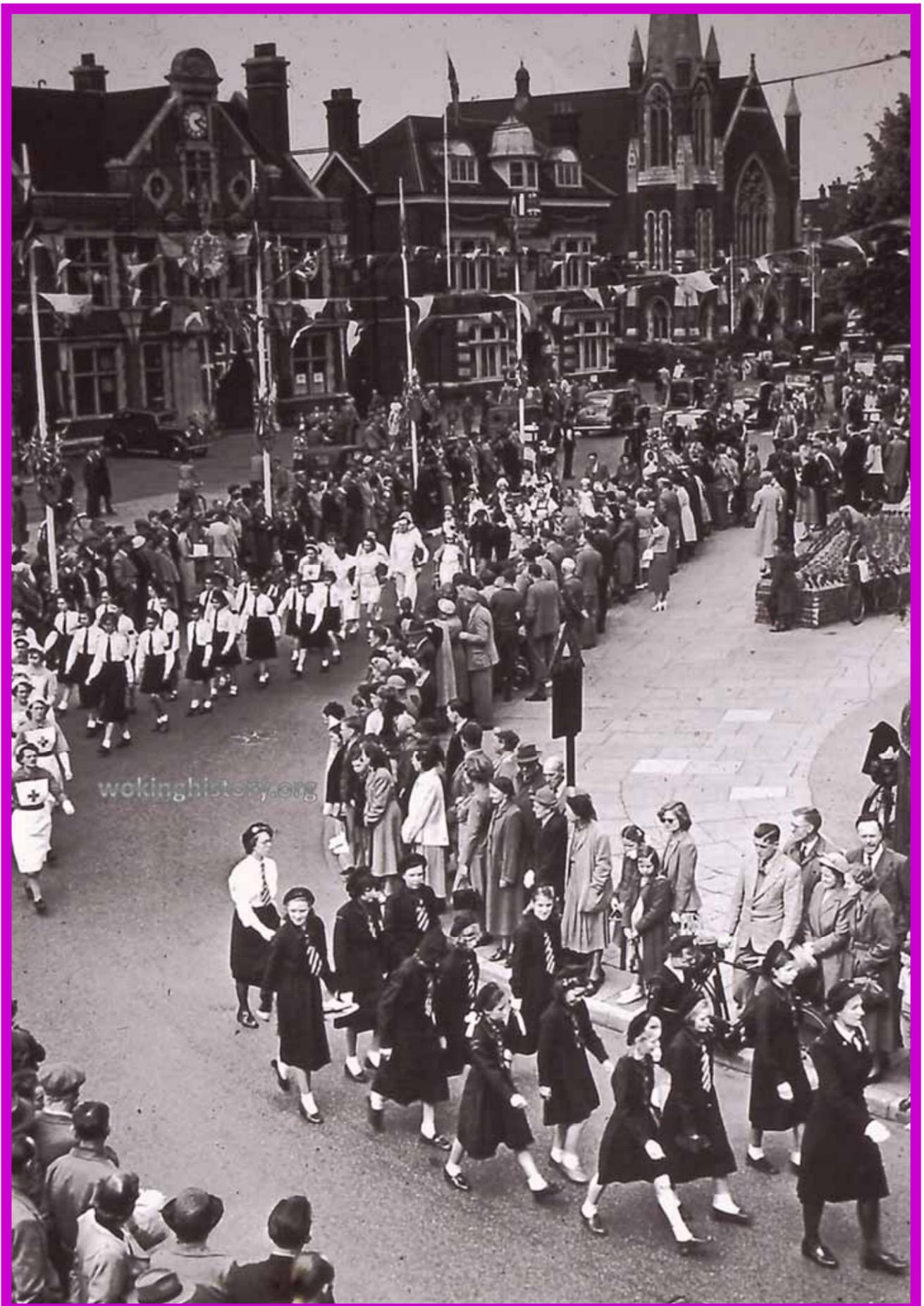
demonstration of diving at the pool by the Metropolitan School of Diving.

The 'Dagenham Girl Pipers Band' were the council's preferred option to lead the celebrations on the Saturday, but perhaps not surprisingly they were unable to attend, so Woking's second choice was the slightly more 'local' Weymann Works Band and Choir from Addlestone who were engaged at a cost of £100 (plus the cost of refreshments) to perform at Woking Park from 3pm to midnight – surely a bargain as far as the ratepayers of Woking was concerned.

Leading the parade through the streets, however, was the Staff Band of the Royal Army Medical Corps, followed by troops, 'the khaki-clad Home Guard', members of the Army Training Corp, the Army and Navy Cadets, the A.R.P. youth organisations and finally the Woking Salvation Army Band. These were followed by a procession of decorated vehicles organised by the Woking Chamber of Trade, all heading under the Victoria Arch from the town to Woking Park where amongst other events there was a performance by police dogs and their handlers, a gymnastic display by the children of the Southern Railway Servants' Orphanage, and old-time dancing and a folk dance (with a 'variety and talent show' compared by Noel Allen). The day ended with a 'firework portrait' of the Queen.

There had been suggestions that there should be a more 'permanent' commemoration 'constructed', with a children's paddling pool in

For those not lucky enough to have a new television set (or an invite to view a neighbour's one), the Ritz were showing 'The only full-length film of the Coronation in Warnercolor' (U Certificate), all the next week at 1.15, 3.55, 6.35 and 9.15



RITZ

WOKING
Phone: 1020

THIS WEEK: Doors Open 12.50 Continuous 1.0 Last Performance 7.30

The only Full-length film of the Coronation in Warnercolor

ELIZABETH IS QUEEN
(U) 1.15 3.55 6.35 9.15

MERVYN JOHNS CLIFFORD EVANS

VALLEY OF SONG
(U) 2.10 4.50 7.30

<p>SUNDAY June 14th Doors open 1.15</p> <p>EDMUND O'BRIEN RHONDA FLEMING</p> <p>THE REDHEAD AND THE COWBOY (A) 5.40, 8.20</p>	<p>BOWERY BOYS</p> <p>TRIPLE TROUBLE (U) 4.30, 7.0</p>
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NEXT WEEK: Doors open 1.35, Continuous 1.45, Last Performance 6.50

<p>Clark Gable Gene Tierney (U) 2.0 5.20 8.35</p> <p>Barbara Payton James Hayter (A) 3.35 6.50</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NEVER LET ME GO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE</p>
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In February 1953 the council's minutes recorded that 'Mr Raymond C Bishop of Knaphill' had suggested 'the erection of a Posterity Post-Box' whereby 'letters could be posted by Civic dignitaries and representatives of organisations to their successors of the year 2003 A.D.' – the whole costing an estimated £200 (the majority of which would have been the box itself, constructed by Messrs C H Sex and Sons, of Send, at a cost of between £130 and £150).

Woking Park initially suggested, but this met some opposition and eventually the idea that some other, less extravagant, 'monument' might be acceptable such as a 'bus shelter, seats, a small statue' or failing that a flowering shrub or tree was approved.

At the time it seemed more important to spend the small amount of money they had on having a 'proper knees-up' - and who can blame them.