



# Deputy Town Mayor's Report

June 2016

# Victory Day and the Queen's Birthday Celebration

## **Sunday 12 June, Yateley Green**

On Sunday 12 June, I represented The Town Mayor in attending the 70th Anniversary of the Victory Day celebrations the parish staged in 1946, including a Service of Remembrance, and to celebrate the occasion of the Queen's 90th Birthday on Yateley Green.

The weather, which threatened proceedings by a torrential downpour only an hour or two before the event opened, was blessedly restrained during the afternoon, alternating between brilliant warm sunshine and intimidating lowering skies, but the rain clouds scooted past without daring to disappoint the enjoyment of the crowd.

Unfortunately, the planned peal of bells from St Peter's, to echo those of the original Victory Day on 9 June 1946, were silenced by lack of bell ringers to complete the band. However, the Yateley Morris Men had bells to spare to dispel any disappointment.

Everyone I spoke to was having a thoroughly enjoyable day. Those dressing up in period costume put in particularly effective effort, while those turning up to spectate were royally entertained. The displays were impressive, with a vintage NFS fire engine, supplemented by a couple of AFS re-enactors, a Police mobile caravan kitted out for the appropriate decade, various people dressed in ARP and Civil Defence uniforms, who even kitted out Mike Griffiths, who came to lead the Service of Remembrance in ARP armband, cassock and tin helmet! The Red Cross also had a tent with a display of WWII memorabilia, medical orderly and nurse dressed in appropriate uniform. Westfields PreSchool Playgroup had a tent kitted out with wooden toys (and plenty of staff on hand) to allow parents to leave children safely for a time to join in the celebrations. The 3rd and 9th Bramshill Scouts manned the food tent providing BBQ'd US-style hot dogs, burgers, pork and spam, tea and cake in a separate tent, while others provided children's entertainment. The Yateley Society put on a fascinating exhibition about Yateley in 1926 in the Rose Rent Room. Tea was free for those bringing their own mug, just as it was in 1946.

So many people to thank for the success of the event, as well as those mentioned above: singing by Karl of Real Vintage, compere and disc jockey Phil of GI45, and the Red Cross for providing first aid. They were actually needed when poor Chloe fell in the sack race and broke a bone in her lower arm.

Last but not least among those deserving of thanks, our Town Clerk Jane Biscombe had such a firm hand in all the organising of the event that even Mother Nature thought twice about over stepping her mark! I knew I could relax, knowing that Jane would keep me on cue all afternoon, although I confess she did manage to lose me a

June 2016

## Deputy Town Mayor report

couple of times. After a short speech by me, Yateley Morris Men started the proceedings off with their traditional dances and smacking of staffs, with the highwayman horse causing his usual mischief. This was followed by a valiant attempt at the Lambeth Walk, with Phil trying to inject a little Cockney swagger. This was followed by Karl's crooner style singing and some swing dancing.

Judging the fancy dress, the only fair result was to have all the children tying for first place, they were all that good.

One of the highlights for me was sharing an afternoon tea and cakes (with Jane's home-made bread pudding) with a local resident who served as an ATS Sergeant during WWII. Angela Roe was only 17 when she joined the ATS and trained at Aldermaston in 1940, before being assigned to The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. She was made up to Sergeant when she was 20. She served for five and a half years, from the age of 17 to 22, so she "lost" those years where she lived a disciplined life, yet had to grow up quickly. Now, she was sharing those memories with us. Angela was accompanied by her granddaughter and great grandson Charlie.



Joining us for tea was a pair of the "On Parade" re-enactors, Sandy and Peter Parker, who had wheeled the utility pram around, attracting lots of interest from the mums. They had found it following a loft clearance and restored it to look like new. They are veterans of these displays and have a collection of various uniforms, some authentic and salvaged from house clearances, others made as replicas, including the essential embroidered badges. Sandy has a genuine ATS uniform that she wears occasionally and they quizzed Angela about all aspects of the uniform and badges.

They told an interesting story about being invited to meet the Queen in 2005, on the 60th anniversary of the ending of the war. The Queen was very interested in some of the badges that Sandy wore and remarked that she had to give up her uniform at the end of her service. Presumably primed beforehand, Peter had researched and assembled the five badges that the Queen had once worn in the ATS, and presented her with the set mounted in a picture frame, something she said she would treasure, and her joy at receiving them was clear on her face.

June 2016

## Deputy Town Mayor report

Angela entertained us with memories of the dances that ENSA staged weekly, the only release these youngsters had from the discipline and tension of those far off war years. Another time was having to check houses where her girls were billeted on Broadstairs sea front. Alone, she had to march down in a total blackout, knock on each door to check they were all present and correct by 10.30pm and then had to make her way back home. She was frightened all the way, she said, but so proud of herself when she made it back to her billet. Her other regret was having her 21st birthday party in the Sergeants' Mess instead of at home with her family and friends.

All in all this event was a wonderful celebration that was a pleasure to participate in.