

VILLAGE ECHOES

Over the centuries, Goudhurst has had a number of Royal visits – although not many within in living memory! Edward I is said to have passed through Goudhurst in 1299 and again in 1305 on his way to and from a stay at Sissinghurst, or Milkhouse Street as it was then known. Pattenyden Manor (Pattenden – accompanying illustration by Len Pierce) was graced by visits of Henry VIII, a close friend of the then owner Lord Berkeley, when it was used as a hunting lodge. He came with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and the original stained glass emblems in the banqueting hall commemorate these visits. In keeping with family tradition, his daughter, Elizabeth I also stayed there on her progress through Kent in 1573.

Not all “Royal” visitors had connections to the British throne. For instance, in September 1865, while on a visit to Britain, Queen Emma, who was the young widow of the late king of the Sandwich Islands (nowadays known as Hawaii), paid a visit to Kilndown church where, according to newspaper reports, she admired the internal decorations; precisely why she chose to visit Kilndown the newspapers do not say, but perhaps she was, as *The Times* had reported, also visiting one of the “*notabilities of England*”, who may have lived in the vicinity.

Probably the best recorded visit of a foreign Royal to Goudhurst was that of King Lewanika, the paramount chief of Barotseland, NW Rhodesia, in July 1902. In England to attend the coronation of King Edward VII, he took the opportunity to visit his two sons, Imasika and Lubasi, who were pupils at Bethany School as well as a short visit to Goudhurst Ladies College. One can imagine the excitement such a visit would have caused in those far-off days; Goudhurst’s inhabitants had decorated the streets and lined the pavements to cheer the King as he and his entourage were driven through the village in an open carriage. His visit was commemorated by a memorial stone laid in the (then) newly built wing of the school and by the issue of a postcard.

More recently, in June 1938, the Duke of Kent came to Goudhurst where he visited the Ex-Servicemen’s Club and, after speaking to several of those present, he proceeded upstairs to the Infant Welfare Centre where he spent time talking to the mothers and babies and was presented with a white carnation for his buttonhole. He was then conducted to the parish hall where, apart from meeting more of the local dignitaries, he also viewed an exhibition relating to the village which had been assembled by members of the Village History Society and others. The entire visit, if accounts are to be believed, was all over in the space of 20 minutes!

Local History Society