

GOUDHURST & KILNDOWN PEACE CELEBRATIONS - JULY 1919

On November 11th 1918 fighting ceased on the Western Front. People wanted to celebrate but the war was not officially over. Negotiations to set the terms of peace continued at the Paris Peace Conference until 1920 but, when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28th June 1919, the government deemed negotiations were sufficiently close to a conclusion to begin arrangements for national celebrations to mark the end of the war. Saturday 19th July 1919 was declared a Bank Holiday and a Public Holiday throughout the United Kingdom.

GOUDHURST'S preparations for peace celebrations began well before Peace Day was announced. They started with a public meeting in the Parish Hall on 1st April and Dr. Collingridge chaired the meeting. He had found a copy of the programme for the Coronation celebrations in 1911 and suggested that might form the basis for the celebrations. A sizeable committee was formed with Mr J C Gripper, headmaster of the Goudhurst School, elected as chairman. A series of events was subsequently planned for the day and the vicarage field was lent for the occasion.

At intervals throughout the day the church bells were rung. There was a procession of flag-bearing schoolchildren from their schools in West Road to the vicarage field headed by the Goudhurst Brass Band and the Boy Scouts' Band. A sports afternoon was organised for children and adults. There were team events including relay races and a tug of war and there was also a special race for ex-service and discharged soldiers and sailors. Greatest fun of all was probably the pillow fight.

A fancy dress competition was well supported and competitors processed from the Plain to the vicarage. There were prizes for the winners in three classes: children, ladies, and gentlemen. Prizes were also awarded for the best decorated perambulator and the best decorated single horse vehicle.



PEACE CELEBRATIONS, 1919.
FANCY DRESS.
LEFT TO RIGHT: MISS C. COLLISON, MISS K. CHRISTMAS, MISS R. COLLISON (£1 PRIZE), MISS W. EXCELL.

Photo: Mrs. C. Collison.

When the sports were finished, tea was served in Mr Fry's field in Back Lane. The day was rounded off with fireworks and at 11pm a bonfire was lit in the Glebe Field. An aerial balloon was released from the church tower, which had been floodlit by eight large motor lamps running off a generator.

Following the celebrations on 19th, a Victory Ball was held in Goudhurst Parish Hall on Wednesday 23rd July. The ball was well attended and dancing continued into the early hours of the following day.

KILNDOWN held their celebrations in the Cricket Field and Mr J Ager, the headmaster of Kilndown School, was secretary of the committee overseeing arrangements for the entertainment.

The day began with the ringing of the church bells. Then there was music by a string band from Tunbridge Wells. There were side-shows for the young men, a country dancing display by the school children, and a ladies versus gentlemen cricket match.

A series of sports events was arranged for the residents of Kilndown. Every schoolchild taking part in the sports was given a prize.

Between 3 o'clock and 5.30pm tea was served. The day was brought to a close with fireworks and a bonfire.

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