

Peace Day was an additional national bank holiday on 19th July 1919 on which celebrations took place throughout the country. In the newspaper of 25th July 1919 can be found detailed descriptions of the local Peace Day Celebrations; these are packed with names of committee members, officials, generous benefactors and competition winners and ran to several columns of newspaper print for Ely alone. A truncated version follows:

“Organised on a big scale, the peace celebrations at Ely proved a great success, affording enjoyment for old and young alike. The arrangements of the day were in the hands of a strong committee... who accomplished wonders in the limited time at their disposal. A procession, dinner, and sports to the Comrades of the War and all Ely soldiers and sailors home on leave or who had been demobilised, tea and sports to the elementary school children, and a bonfire made up the programme. Tradesmen and residents, in addition to responding willingly and handsomely to the appeal for subscriptions – there was little or no thought of rate-aided celebrations – did their utmost to make the City look as gay as possible and that the acme of perfection was attained in that respect was universally admitted. High street was literally a blaze of colour, and although little was attempted in the artistic line, except at the Constitutional Club, the loyalty and patriotism of the inhabitants was strikingly demonstrated on every hand. Viewed on a whole, the decorations were most pleasing to the eye, and did justice to the gladdest day in history. A little rain fell at intervals during the afternoon and early evening, but it was not enough to damp the ardour of the joyous throng or to interfere in any way with the arrangements. Fireworks were discharged ad libitum throughout the day, and due regard was not always paid to the safety of pedestrians.

“THE PROCESSION

“Any qualms there may have been as to the success of the procession were dispelled long before the human train left the King’s School ground.... Ely has not seen such a procession before, and it is not likely to again. ...Among the first to march on to the school ground, when the procession was formed were the King’s School Scouts, the Girl Guides and the representatives of the different Friendly Societies with their regalia and banners. The Girl Guides turned out in strong force, numbering, with the Brownies, some 150.....Barton Road and Square were soon black with people, and close in the wake of the Comrades of the War, soldiers home on leave and old veterans, who marched four deep and in perfect step, under Major G.L. Archer, Capt. C. Bendall, and Capt. the Rev. F.J. Bywaters, came several motors, in which were seated clergy men and members of public bodies.

“The procession was headed by the Chief Marshall, Mr R. L. Buckle, and the Ely Comrades of the War Band, following which came the demobilised soldiers etc. and three cars containing discharged soldiers who were unable to march, these cars being driven by Major W. J. C. Luddington, Mr E.R.Evans and Mr A. Cass. The Colours of the Cambs Regt. and the Union Jack were borne in front of the Comrades.



The demobilised soldiers, followed by the cars with the discharged soldiers unable to march.

Other cars followed, the occupants being: 1st car, The Bishop of Ely and the High Sherriff; *the Dean of Ely and other local clergy followed in the rest of the cars with the Chairman of the Isle County Council, the Chairman of the Ely Urban District Council and a number of Urban Councillors.* The G.E.R. Band under bandmaster H. Vail came next; followed by members of the City Fire Brigade in uniform; members of the City of Ely Juvenile Foresters (with banner); Oak of the Forest (with banner); Shepherds, Oddfellows, National Deposit Friendly Society, and Cambs. Order of United Brethren (with banner); fourteen members of the V.A.D. 48 Cambs, the Girl Guides, and Brownies, the King's



Going down the High Street – the car with local Councillors followed by the Fire Brigade and then the G.E.R. Band (the newspaper article has them in the wrong order!) – behind them the various local Friendly Societies.

School Scouts, and other scholars behind whom walked the headmaster and masters. The decorated bicycles which brought up the rear were the features of the procession and deservedly won great admiration. A model of H.M.S Victory was “manned” by the Masters Jeffrey and Tom Legge, who thus represented the Navy in the pageant. *Decorated bicycles represented Peace, Hero and Crown. Decorated dolls prams were pushed by children dressed as a Poppy, Red Riding Hood, a pierrot and a Dutch boy.* The comic element was introduced by John Bull, Master and Madam Clown, a jockey and bare back rider.

“The procession was about half a mile in length and the route lay via Barton Road, Cambridge Road, St Mary’s Street, High Street, Fore Hill, Broad Street, Back Hill, the Gallery, Market Street to the Market Square.

“.....the processionalists fell in their allotted positions in the Market Square to hear the reading of the King’s Proclamation. The High Sherriff made his way to the entrance to the City Picture Hall, *the clergy lined up on his left and other dignitaries on his right*. The demobbed men etc lined up in file facing the hall and altogether the crowd on the square must have numbered about 1,500.

“Mr Sillett, G.E.R. Band and Mr A. Broad, Comrades Band, standing on the steps of the Picture Hall , played the drum roll, and after the salute by Bugler W. Worrell, the High Sherriff read the Proclamation. Three cheers were then given for the King followed by the singing of the first verse of the national anthem.

“DINNER TO THE MEN

“The Ely Comrades of the War and all soldiers or sailors on leave or demobilised were invited to dinner at the Corn Exchange and some six hundred men accepted the invitation, two sittings being necessary. The building had been very prettily decorated by members of the Royal Air Force on the occasion of a dance they held the previous evening, the overhead embellishments being admired by all.



This photograph is labelled as Peace Day Victory Ball, but no ball is mentioned in the extensive newspaper account – this is probably the RAF dance the evening before the main festivities. The “overhead embellishments” can be clearly seen.

“Over 300 men sat down at one o’clock, the remainder of the guests being entertained in the City Picture Hall until the time came for them to partake of the good things provided. The Bishop of Ely presided... Each man was presented with a cigar or cigarettes on leaving. Selections were played by both Comrades’ and Railway Bands during the meal.

“MEN’S SPORTS

“A big crowd, estimated at 3,000 people, assembled on the Paradise Recreation Ground during the afternoon to watch the sports arranged for the Comrades and all Ely Soldiers and Sailors. The ground was kindly lent by Mr C. Laceby. *The events were a wheelbarrow*



race, 100 yard flat race, tug-of-war, a band race in which contestants had to play their instruments while running, 440 yards flat race, 220 yards flat race and a veterans race for men over 40.

“CHILDREN’S TEA



“One of the prettiest sights of the day was the procession of elementary school children, numbering about 1,000, to the Barracks Parade ground for tea. The boys and girls met at their own schools, the infants at Market Street and Broad Street and the elder scholars at Silver Street. They were each presented with a Union Jack, which they held up as they marched through the streets.

The Market Street Infants led the way, and behind them came the Broad Street Infants and two wagons one containing the children from Adelaide and the other the little ones from Chettisham. It was a striking pageant.

“Cyril Robinson, carrying the Union Jack, led the way, and was followed by three little girls representing England, France and Belgium..... *and another as Peace. The boys from Needhams School, the cathedral choir boys and a few Bedford House children were also present.*

“The members of the Tea Committee did their work thoroughly. Every boy and girl on leaving was presented with a bar of toffee.

“CHILDREN’S SPORTS

“The children’s sports, also held on the Paradise ground, commenced at half-past five, and lasted close on three hours, without a break of any description. All Ely seemed to be present. Owing to the number of entries and short notice the heats had to be arranged on the ground, and the officials had no light task.. In some of the races three or four heats were necessary, while the entries for the tug-of-war reached three figures. A model of R34 was shown in one of the decorated hoop parades. Some of the competitors in the egg and spoon races had to be cautioned for holding the eggs as well as the spoon. One boy was espied carrying the egg in one hand and the spoon in the other. The local bands played selections during the evening, and the visitors to the ground included the Bishop of Ely and Mrs Chase, and the Dean of Ely.

“The decorations were extremely effective. In the absence of any pre-arranged scheme tradesmen and private residents rose to the occasion admirably, and the route of the procession was gay with flags, bunting, drapery etc. The glorious Union Jack was to be seen everywhere. High street and Fore hill were a great credit to the tradesmen and the Constitutional Club looked a picture. Some of the side streets also looked very pretty.

“At night a bonfire was lit on the Common, where hundreds of people assembled. Fireworks were discharged throughout the evening, and no one seemed to mind the drizzling rain which fell when the fire was at its height.

“Admiring crowds collected outside the residence of Ald. C. Laceby, fairy lights galore being hung round the charming grounds and between the trees, while on the walls the letters G and R, with the crown, all formed in fairy lights, were also illuminated. The residences of Mr G.M. Hall and Mr J.D. Cutlack were also adorned with G and R in fairy lights, and another place which attracted considerable attention was the archway leading from the High street to the Choir school. The roof was illuminated with Chinese lanterns and fairy lights,,, fairy lights were also placed at the foot of the wall on either side of the arch.

“PEACE JOTTINGS

“St Mary’s bellringers were most active and energetic, peals being rung from the belfry at intervals during the day.



“”The medical section of the Girl Guides carried Georgiana Phillips as a stretcher case. She had been bandaged for a fractured leg.

“The Adelaide school children who visited Ely and partook of tea with the city boys and girls were conveyed in a waggon kindly lent by Mr S. Cross and prettily decorated by Miss H. Cross. Before leaving Adelaide Mr and Mrs J. Sanders gave the little ones a 7lb tin of sweets with which to regale themselves on the outward and homeward journey.

“The War Shrine looked a perfect picture, being profusely decorated with choice red, white and blue flowers. Over the shrine appeared the Union Jack and the White Ensign.

“The inmates of the Almshouses were not forgotten altogether. Some of the provisions which were left over were sent to them.”

While the Adelaide and Chettisham villagers appear to have been part of the Ely celebrations, Prickwillow organised its own Peace Day programme:

“Never in the memory of the oldest inhabitant has Prickwillow been en fete as it was on Saturday....Tables and seating accommodation for the whole village had been provided in a field tent lent by Mr A. G. Edwards, and a course was roped for the sports.

"A triumphal arch had been erected at the entrance to the field, and flags were attached to the posts enclosing the course. In a sideshow a tablecloth used at a dinner at Mildenhall at the peace celebrations after the Battle of Waterloo, kindly lent by Miss Burgess of Ely, was exhibited together with a war relic picked up in France by Nurse Cross.

"A canteen was ably managed by Mr E. Bedford. Mrs J. Taylor and Mr A.G. Edwards were responsible for the catering, and a plentiful supply of ham, beef etc was delivered at the school to be made into sandwiches by a busy contingent of ladies, superintended by Miss Marsh.

"The sports were a huge success. Mr A.G. Edwards had been granted a sum of £30 for prizes, and a lengthy programme was provided.

"One of the most attractive items in the afternoon was the comic cricket match, arranged principally to delight the children, but the comic antics of the 13 clowns sent the hundreds of spectators into roars of laughter. The opposing team had no chance whatever against them, especially as the umpires waived their decisions either way for a cigarette. E.W. Edwards, the Clowns' captain, was an institution of himself. His wardrobe was somewhat inexhaustible, and so was his shirt, seeing that when he unrobed it reached the full length of the pitch.

" The programme opened with a procession at 1.30 p.m. headed by the management committee. The children carrying flags and banners, followed, commencing with the youngest. Two nurses and a doctor were drawn on a lorry. Then came the demobilised men in two sections. Separating the sections was a space of about 12 yards, in the centre of which walked two little girls, one carrying a wreath of laurels and the other a wreath of white lilies. Two other girls, also in white, walked in front of the soldiers and sailors carrying a banner on which were the words "Lest we forget the absent ones". This formed a pathetic link in the chain, but its meaning was obvious, and showed clearly "the broken ranks". The clowns followed. The music of the band was somewhat drowned by the singing (?) from other parts of the procession; it was just as well perhaps, considering the band had only had time to get in ne rehearsal. The general public followed. The village was at unity, and no one remembers such a lengthy procession ever taking place in the village before.

"After parading, the village, a return was made to the field when the comic cricket match commenced. At three o'clock the children's sports took place. A grand display of fireworks terminated the day's enjoyment.

"A meeting of the management committee was held on Monday evening, to settle up accounts. It was an agreeable surprise to learn that, after discharging all the bills, a balance of £5 remained in hand. It was unanimously decided to present each child attending school and under school age with a mug as a memento of the day. It was further agreed to spend the balance in providing a substantial hot dinner in the school in Wednesday August 6th to all ex-Service men and any men still serving who happened to be home on leave, together with their wives or lady friends."