

## **High Wych History - 18 – summer parties and fetes**

Last month I mentioned the open air celebrations that greeted the end of the Second World War. This time I'd like to return to the theme and talk about summer fetes in general. Elsewhere in this magazine you probably have noticed the announcements for this year's Village Fete in September.

In the olden days, it is often said, we had more sense of community. We all went to the same school, the same church, the same pub and we also mainly worked locally. Entertainment also had to be sought nearer home. That said, summertime open air festivities came in all shapes and sizes and were organised by all sorts of people. The earliest such I found evidence of took place at the Grange in 1871 just ten years after Henry Frank Johnson became our first vicar. The Grange was at that point the vicar's residence. The event was held in aid of the "society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts" I particularly liked the reference to the serving of "refreshments of an acceptable character"!

Indeed most fetes, garden parties, summer festivals and such like were organised to raise money for charities: the women's institute, the memorial hall, the school. On a lot of earlier occasions the events were held at the manor of Groves and the Buxton family often played host. So it was in July 1919 when the end of the First World War was celebrated. There were sack races, potato races, an egg and spoon race with open umbrella (!?) and a dressing race. A tug of war between returning soldiers and civilians was won by the civilians.

In 1938 a "coronation fete" was held. A photograph on the next page shows Charles and Lou Franklin properly dressed up for the occasion. Charles was a retired policeman, Lou a daughter of Joseph Smith, the last blacksmith. In 1943 the H&E Observer writes of a fete at the Manor in aid of the Red Cross.

Post war fetes were mainly held at the Grange and for many years there was no single village fete. There were however separate outdoor events. The village fete at The Grange in the 1950s was always a big village affair where people bowled for a real pig, children threw balls into pots to win goldfish, the coconut shy was seen as a pitting of strength to try and get the coconut off the post without breaking it and of course the two pubs took part in the tug of war.

From 1965 I find evidence of a scout fete held next to the (not yet extended\ ) village hall and a WI fete at the Grange. The 1977 silver jubilee was celebrated widely however. Charles Wentworth Stanley chaired the organizing committee. A fair on the playing fields featured Scottish dancing, fancy dress and the planting of a memorial tree. At the school there were joy rides, a celebratory lunch and Mrs Scott, then resident at the Manor of Groves came over to cut the cake using a rather enormous sword for the occasion.

My personal memories of Fetes are mainly to do with the school. I was a member of the PTA by then and heavily involved in the organising. Fancy dress was obligatory. Once I appeared as the sheriff of Nottingham another time as a French Gendarme. My final appearance was as Mrs. Sdrawkcab a fortune telling lady from a planet where everything ran backwards!! Phil Attelsey, a fellow PTA member at the time has similar memories. "With all these blokes cross dressing, we were getting some funny remarks!"

Organising Village Fetes is not easy though and we should be grateful to those amongst us that are still willing to take on the task. This year there is no flower festival and no art festival but the Village Fete on the playing fields will be held with participation of and in support of a number of local organisations. Paul Stephenson, also the Village Hall chairman is in charge. Let us hope for nice weather.

Thanks this time go to Phil Attelsey, the late John Sapsford, Patricia Smith, and Janet van de Bilt. As so often I thank Elisabeth Reeve on behalf of the Herts and Essex Observer and the people at HALS, aka County Archives. Previous articles from this series (many in extended versions) can be downloaded from the Parish Council website at <http://www.highwychandallensgreen.co.uk/8.html> Meanwhile, the High Wych History Project still needs your contributions, your memories, stories and photographs. Get in touch!! Contact me at: [theo@vandebilt.co.uk](mailto:theo@vandebilt.co.uk) or phone me at 01279 725468

## GARDEN PARTY AT HIGH WYCH VICARAGE.

For the first time in this locality one of these pleasant and interesting gatherings, a "garden party," was held on Wednesday afternoon, the 19th inst., at High Wych Vicarage, in aid of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

The chair was taken by Mr. J. W. Perry Watlington. The school children were present, and took part in the singing, and an harmonium was brought into the garden for the accompaniments, which were played by Mr. French.

The CHAIRMAN mentioned that letters had been received from Mr. Caldenot, and the Revds. J. Menet, W. J. Copeland, and S. P. Field, expressing regret at their unavoidable absence. In a vigorous and earnest address, Mr. Watlington proceeded to set forth the claims which the society had upon them for increased and extended support. If they were as they professed to be, sincere believers in christianity, it seemed to be impossible to deny their duty to extend as far as they could the knowledge of Christ. They knew the command of the Lord to go and to preach to all nations. Every christian church was bound therefore to be a missionary church, and every christian individual was bound to support missionary enterprise. This society sought to accomplish its ends in a two-fold manner: it sought to secure to members of our church abroad not only the ministrations of priests, but of bishops also, and it made direct missionary exertions to the heathen. He briefly glanced at the work done by the society during the 170 years of existence. When it first commenced there were not 20 clergymen engaged upon the work it set itself to do; now there were 4,000, and of these some 464 were supported by this society. After alluding to the work done through the society's instrumentality in the diocese of Gibraltar, India, the islands of Melanesia, Cape Town, Newfoundland, &c., the chairman concluded by recommending the society as one which had the best claim upon churchmen of any society at present in existence. It is formed on the best principles, and is deserving of our most earnest support. [Applause.]

Bishop CLAUGHTON gave an interesting account from his own practical experience of the work done by the society in the dioceses of St. Helena and Colombo; and strongly urged the importance of foreign mission work.

The Rev. T. R. KEWLEY added important testimony to the necessity of extending the society's means and usefulness.

Mr. GLYN, in proposing a vote of thanks to the speakers, made a passing allusion to the loving energy and deep interest taken in church matters by the Rev. H. F. Johnson and his wife, and thanked them for introducing them to the novelty of this missionary garden. He thought they had passed many years in the neighborhood without having the very valuable work of home and foreign missions brought before them that they might do their best to support them.

The collection amounted to the handsome sum of nearly £29.

Refreshments of an acceptable character were provided in the garden for the visitors.



^ 1938 : Charles and Lou Franklin at the Coronation Fete.

HIGH WYCH PARISH



JUBILEE CELEBRATION

JUNE 7TH

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



^ September 2012 – Last year's Village Fete

^ 1871 The Chelmsford Chronicle reports from High Wych.