

Object(s): Ribbon

Object Number(s): STMEA:1988-26.9

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Ribbon

This interesting object in our collection, is a red, white and blue ribbon; which would have been worn as a patriotic emblem during the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on June 2, 1953. It belonged to Mrs Violet Farrow, nee Turner, the sister-in-law of the donor of this object and the owner of a wide array of other interesting items that are now part of the Museum's collection.

Several items in our collection belonged to Mrs Farrow including; books, a business document, newspaper, several sewing kits, tin boxes, personal clothing and doll's tea and dinner services. There is also a souvenir programme of the Queen's Coronation¹ (See STMEA: 1988-26.10 and STMEA:2006-56) which is connected to the ribbon as both items were used by Mrs Farrow during the Coronation and the celebrations which took place in Stowmarket at the time. Very little is known about Mrs Farrow who worked as a maid for Mrs Savory at The Gables. However, the presence of these objects in our collection shows that Mrs Farrow took part in one of the significant and historical events in 20th century British history.

The History of Red Gables

As we have seen, Mrs Farrow was as a maid at Red Gables². At the time the owner of the house was Mrs Savory, who leased Red Gables in 1925. Today the property is a Wellbeing Hub and centre for community volunteering in Stowmarket.

The house was built in the 1860's for Mr Eustace Prentice, on land, known as Windmill Field and Brick Clay Pit; part of the extensive Abbots Hall estate, owned from 1859 by William Prentice³. The house was originally known as "Woodfield" - a name later given to a bowling club situated in the road that now crosses the original site. Eustace Prentice was a member of the influential Prentice family who contributed significantly to the industrial expansion of the town throughout the 19th century.

The Prentice family either owned or were connected with agriculture, as owners of the Abbots Hall estate, chemical works, brickmaking and a Gun-Cotton Factory which was built in 1863 on land next to the railway line and owned by the Prentice family. The development of the factory was beneficial

¹ eHive - Museum of East Anglian Life [Internet]. Museum of East Anglian Life. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <http://eastanglianlife.org.uk/collections/search/ehive/67495/>

² [Internet]. Redgables.org.uk. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.redgables.org.uk/the-history-of-red-gables>

³ Baldry J. Plan of the Abbots Hall estate. Stowmarket; 2002. [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from Museum of East Anglian Life, Archives.

to the social and economic growth of the town⁴, even though two tragic explosions on August 11, 1871, caused damage and devastation to the whole area, leading to 23 deaths including William and Edward Prentice. The family found this loss hard to reconcile leading to them selling the factory to The New Explosives Company in 1880⁵.

During WWI the house was owned by Mrs Story and was known as "Lockington House", until the name was finally converted into Red Gables by Mrs Savory in 1925. At this time, the grounds were quite extensive running from one side of the house along Ipswich Road as far as Boulters Watermill, alongside the River Rat.

In 1937 Octavious Seaman & Son, the local building contractors, bought the estate and a few years later Mr Seaman built a library for the town, in the grounds of Red Gables, to commemorate the 21st Birthday of his daughter Phyllis. In 1939 the entire building was sold to Stowmarket's Urban District Council (Stowmarket Town Council since 1974) becoming its main offices together with the Registration Office for the town. The Town council vacated the house during the 1980's.

The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

On June 2, 1953, the 27-year-old Queen Elizabeth II took the Coronation Oath in Westminster Abbey in London, in front of more than 8,000 guests, including prime ministers and heads of state from around the Commonwealth⁶. The event was celebrated with stunning pageantry and marked the beginning of the second longest reign in British history.

The Queen's Coronation Oath:

*"The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God"*⁷

HRH Princess Margaret remembers:

*"The coronation was like a phoenix-time. Everything was being raised from the ashes ... getting better and better"*⁸

⁴ Abiding mystery of the Stowmarket gun cotton explosion [Internet]. Eastern Daily Press. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/1871-tragedy-which-cost-23-lives-1214184>

⁵ Williams S, Williams S, Gurhy G. Heritage Circle, Sue and Steve Williams, The Stowmarket Gun Cotton Explosion of 1871 [Internet]. 1st ed. Ipswich: One Suffolk; 2018 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <http://heritagecircle.onesuffolk.net/assets/Uploads/201510Sue-and-Steve-Williams.pdf>

⁶ BBC ON THIS DAY | 2 | 1953: Queen Elizabeth takes coronation oath [Internet]. News.bbc.co.uk. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/2/newsid_2654000/2654501.stm

⁷ 2. The Queen's Coronation Oath, 1953 [Internet]. The Royal Family. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.royal.uk/coronation-oath-2-june-1953>

⁸ 3. The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II - Google Arts & Culture [Internet]. Google Arts & Culture. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-coronation-of-queen-elizabeth-ii%C2%A0/QRV1Gj9m?hl=>

It was a typical British summer's day... it poured with rain!⁹ But the weather couldn't dampen the spirits of the thousands of people who travelled to London from all over Britain and camped out on the pavements along the royal route (See also STMEA: 2012-68) to get the best sight of the royal occasion.

The day began with a procession from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey that was led by the massed bands of the Brigade of Guards, followed by contingents of the armed forces of the Commonwealth nations. Heads of state and foreign royalty travelled by coach and were followed by the Queen herself in the Gold State Coach. Her Majesty's arrival at Westminster Abbey marked the beginning of the religious ceremony which concluded with her coronation¹⁰. After the ceremony, celebrations officially began, with a procession of 7.2km through the streets of London¹¹.

Accompanied by the Royal Family, the Queen made several balcony appearances, being greeted by cheers from the crowd. 150 aircraft flew over Buckingham Palace at 5pm and at midnight, the Queen appeared again on the balcony for the last time to the numerous eager spectators who were still waiting outside accompanied by a great display of fireworks.

The Queen's Coronation on TV¹²

The Coronation was the first ever to be broadcast on live television. Millions of people from all over the globe were able to watch the day unfold in their own homes¹³. It was announced earlier in the year that the crowning of the Queen would be televised, resulting in an unprecedented increase of television sales¹⁴. Neighbours gathered in houses where there was a television set, to watch the celebrations transmitted live by the BBC for a full day of viewing. Many others crowded into cinemas, concert halls and pubs to join the event¹⁵. The occasion was a huge step for television, uniting the nation for a broadcast of the first major international event in the world¹⁶.

⁹ Castelow E., *The Coronation 1953*. Available from: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Coronation-1953/> [Accessed: 2020].

¹⁰ The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953 [Internet]. Historic UK. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Coronation-1953/>

¹¹ 50 facts about The Queen's Coronation [Internet]. The Royal Family. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.royal.uk/50-facts-about-queens-coronation-0>

¹² Archive of Recorded Church Music. Norton uk.norton.com Learn More Ad 1 of 2 · 0:13 uk.norton.com Skip Ads 0:03 / 0:18 BBC TV Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II: Westminster Abbey 1953 (William McKie) [Internet]. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52NTjasbmjw>

¹³ Television reigns: Broadcasting Queen Elizabeth's coronation | Science Museum [Internet]. Science Museum. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/television-reigns-broadcasting-queen-elizabeths->

¹⁴ Harris C. The Queen's Coronation on Camera [Internet]. Dundurn - Publishers of fine books. 2017 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.dundurn.com/news/Queens-Coronation-Camera>

¹⁵ De Castella T. How the Coronation kick-started the love of television [Internet]. BBC News Magazine. 2013 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22688498>

¹⁶ Jackson A. June 2, 1953: Millions watch on TV as Queen Elizabeth II is crowned at Westminster Abbey [Internet]. BT.com News. 2018 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://home.bt.com/news/on-this->



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Street parties and community spirit

The event was celebrated with street parties across the country. Neighbours, gathered together and held celebratory parties, also known as “Peace Teas”¹⁷. Streets and houses were decorated with regal-coloured bunting and flags, children in fancy dress played and enjoyed the treats on offer including; sandwiches and lemonade drinks. Games and competitions were held throughout the day¹⁸. Dances, banquets, parades and processions took place in every part of the land from Bury St Edmunds, in Suffolk¹⁹, to Gateshead²⁰, in the North East of England, and beyond. Coming just after the war years and in the midst of a period of austerity the Coronation gave people a feeling of hope, of pride and certainty for the future.

[day/june-2-1953-millions-watch-on-tv-as-queen-elizabeth-ii-is-crowned-at-westminster-abbey-11363984318961](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-2012-06-26-11363984318961)

¹⁷ History of Street Parties [Internet]. Streetparty.org. 2020 [cited 26 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.streetparty.org.uk/history-of-street-parties/>

¹⁸ Bennett O. Queen's coronation remembered through historic photos of street parties and celebration. The Daily Express [Internet]. 2013 [cited 26 November 2020]; Available from: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/403024/Queen-s-coronation-remembered-through-historic-photos-of-street-parties-and-celebration>

¹⁹ East Anglian Daily Times. 1953: Memories of a Suffolk farmer. [Internet]. 2012 [cited 26 November 2020]; Available from: <https://www.eadt.co.uk/business/1953-memories-of-a-suffolk-farmer-1-1405234>

²⁰ Fletcher R. Gateshead's coronation celebration 1953. Chronicle Live [Internet]. 2013 [cited 26 November 2020]; Available from: <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/gateshead-coronation-celebration-1953-4023761>