

Peace Demonstration at Highworth

The peace demonstration in this little town on the 29th ult was of a first rate character and this gratifying result was attained by the very spirited exertions of **W H Hitchcock** Esq (late of Boddicot House, Oxon) who called a meeting of the principal inhabitants at the king and Queen Inn to take into consideration in what way they could best celebrate the return of peace. It was determined at his meeting that a feast should be given to the poor; a subscription list was accordingly commenced in the room, headed by the above named gentleman with the handsome sum of £10 and upwards of £50 was collected at the meeting.

Donations from Lord **Radnor**, Lady **Warneford**, Earl **Saint Germans** and other distinguished individuals in the neighbourhood were afterwards received and the list ultimately reached £130. Various committees were immediately formed for carrying out the arrangements. On the day chosen for the feast, about 2000 men, women and children sat down at two o'clock to a good dinner provided for them in the High street, down each side of which tables had been arranged the whole length of the street which had been previously most beautifully decorated with evergreens, flags and triumphal arches; a description of the gay scene may not be uninteresting to many of our readers.

The most prominent features of the display were the following:- At the west end of the High street there was erected a very fine arch, composed of evergreens and divided into three, being 30 feet high, surmounted with five flags of various nations (our allies), whilst on each side were designs and the words "*God save the Queen*" in large letters; this arch was also most tastefully decorated with real flowers. At the east end another arch, but of smaller dimensions was erected, being of one span, but it had suspended from the centre a very beautiful design in real flowers, the work of **W P Lavington**; it was in the shape of a regal crown and displayed much taste in the arrangement of the choice flowers of which it was comprised; from the top of this arch floated three flags of large size and gave to it a very pretty appearance.

The whole length of the street (727 feet) was hung on each side with festoons of laurel leaves, flowers being intermixed, each festoon being 43 feet long and hanging over a table and from which a card was suspended, indicating the number of the table; at the end of each festive board was planted a flag giving to the street a most splendid appearance. Nearly in the centre of the high street a music stand, 48 feet square was erected for the band and was decorated in a most beautiful manner. On the west side was a pretty piece of needlework having "*God save the Queen*" in large letters, made with Berlin wool; this was surrounded by a quantity of fine made flowers and above it was hung a hoop of real flowers; from the centre of the music stage which formed an arch over the street, rose a flagstaff to the height of 45 feet and from which floated the union jack; a similar flag, but of smaller dimensions also waved from each of the four corners; at the east side was another piece of needlework in variegated Berlin wool on pink muslin, "*Prosperity to the town of Highworth.*"

Under each of the pieces of needlework was hung, worked in pink rosettes, the words "*Welcome*" on green and "*Peace and Prosperity*" on white muslin; festoons of evergreens hung from the centre staff to each corner forming a sort of artificial roof of green; the highest point decorated being 38 feet. The whole of the above decorations were under the direction of Mr **W Pullin** who was the head of the Decorative Committee. Although great credit is due to the above committee, we must not forget how materially their exertions were aided by the efforts of the various residents of the High street in the shape of decoration.

At the Saracen's head was suspended a very fine globe of real flowers with a large flag, whilst the verandah over Mr **Fuse's** shop exhibited a very beautiful arrangement of real flowers, the whole of the pillars supporting the roof of the verandah having designs formed up them; along the balcony in large letters the words "*Peace and Plenty*" on white calico gave a lightness to the whole which was very pleasing. Over the porch entrance to the King and Queen Inn was suspended in a fanciful way festoons of real flowers – above them were two small flags and over the lamp a wreath of made flowers; from the roof two large flags added greatly to the general effect.

Between each of the upper windows at the front of Mr **Embling's** house were placed within a wreath of laurel leaves and flowers the letters V.A. which were most ingeniously made of strips of red, white and blue plush; beneath the centre window was hung the word "*Peace*" worked in artificial leaves on pink satin surrounded by an arrangement of made paper flowers; on each side of this was placed a very beautifully arranged wreath of artificial French flowers, each surmounted by two small flags emblematical of the occasion; from the three upper windows hung the national flag of France, the national standard of Turkey and the St George of England – all very fine flags

At Mr **Reynold's** there was an arrangement of real flowers forming the word "*Peace*" also having a large flag. Those were the most striking designs, but nearly every house in the street was bedecked with one, two, three and in many instances, four flags, the whole forming a scene the description of which can convey but a faint idea of the general effect; it was beautiful in the extreme.

The amount of food supplied to the poor was:- Boiled beef 3 ½ joints; roast beef 22; roast mutton 16; veal pies 25; mutton pies 65; plum pudding 180 (5lbs each); potatoes 7 sacks; bread 195 4lb loaves; beer 9 barrels.

During the dinner and afternoon an excellent band, under the able direction of **C Willoughby**, enlivened the scene with many popular pieces of music; this band has been lately formed in the town and bids fair to be a very excellent one, if we may judge by their playing on this occasion.

After dinner various rustic sports were enjoyed, such as foot racing, donkey racing, climbing the greasy pole &c &c. About six O'clock a dance was formed in the high street when the lovers of Terpsichore, and there were many of them, had an opportunity of enjoying themselves; the dance extended many hundred feet.

At the appointed hour of separation (half past nine) the band struck up "*God save the Queen*" and at its conclusion all retired to their several homes evidently much delighted with the day's proceedings and with hearts overflowing with gratitude for the feast. Quantities of provisions were left and on the following morning were given to the aged poor and those with large families in the town. The whole of the flags (above 50 in number) were made for the Committee by young ladies in the town.

Truly this little town is making rapid strides to attain that goal in social position so desirable for the welfare and so necessary for the condition of its inhabitants. It speaks volumes for their enterprising character when we find a number of tradesmen united into one band, working for one end, making as it were, a common cause of that which is most likely to be of benefit to the town. Last year was got up a festival which seemed to be unsurpassable tin point of its adornments and this year they have had an opportunity of again displaying the taste, judgment and ability which they possess in such matters, the recent demonstration leaving all previous efforts of artistic skill far behind.

We may conclude by expressing a hope that the blessings of peace may long shed its rays upon this little town, that its residents may be fired with a spirit of enterprise and that their future exertions may, as in this instance, be crowned with complete success.

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