

## Remembering 1952 Not a Good Year

*As we celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne we would love more of our readers' memories of that year.*

I was 13 years old in 1952. It was a bad year. Many souls lost their lives that year through extreme weather.

In early December of 1952 there was a dense smog in London which lasted several days; a thick poisonous fog which killed many people who suffered from respiratory and heart disease. The Clean Air Act was introduced on 15th August and a day later, after

continuous rain, floods caused a landslide in Lynmouth on the Devon coast, with 34 people losing their lives.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September 31 people were killed when a plane broke up over the crowd at Farnborough Airport and on 8<sup>th</sup> October the Harrow and Wealdstone rail crash in North London claimed the lives of 108 people.

### **The King is Dead**

Then of course the year was marked by the death of King George VI. Early on the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> February it was announced on the wireless that the King had died. Throughout the rest of the day all programmes on the wireless and television were cancelled. Only solemn music and news bulletins were broadcast. At school and work everyone went about their tasks in a quiet reflective way. The whole countryside seemed to hang in a sad silence. We had a television set made



up mostly of a large wooden cabinet with a small nine inch screen, over which hung a large square magnifying glass to enlarge the picture. I watched the Royal Cortege move slowly through the streets of London towards Westminster. The coffin on a gun carriage draped in the Union flag was drawn to its resting place in Westminster Hall by men of the Royal Navy. The body of King George

VI lay in state for three days and many thousands of people passed by the coffin to pay homage to their dead King.

### **Long Live the Queen**

In 1952 I was in my second year at Burford Secondary Modern School. A few days after the King's death pupils from the Grammar School and those of us from the Secondary Modern were paraded outside the Tolsey in Burford to listen to a notable member of the Town Council read the Proclamation of Accession. He ended by shouting "*The King is dead. Long live the Queen.*"

No wonder that I thought then that fame and glory are only transient. Great Kings are dead, so are Beethoven and Shakespeare. "*Golden lads and girls all must as chimney-sweepers, come to dust.*" Life goes on regardless.

**Fred Russell**