

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Coronation Return to the Abbey

The sun shone down from a cloudless blue sky as we made our way to Westminster Abbey to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Coronation. We entered the Abbey by the Great West Door. Most of our fellow invitees were veterans from 1953 and Lord Lieutenants - we talked to the Lord Lieutenant of County Tyrone.



received by the Dean and Sub Dean of Westminster to the sublime sound of the choir singing *I Was Glad* by Hubert Parry. On the High Altar was St. Edward's Crown, the first time out of the Tower of London since the coronation in 1953.

The Great Moment Arrives

Walking slowly down the Abbey to our seats we passed the tomb of the Unknown Warrior surrounded by red poppies. We were fortunate to sit close to the organ screen dividing the choir from the nave. Many of my fellow St George's Chapel choristers from 1953 were to sit with us and a great deal of reminiscing went on before the arrival of the Royal family. Eventually the Queen's bodyguard of the Gentlemen at Arms and the resplendently dressed Yeoman of the Guard took up their positions.

For this very important event, all the Queen's children and grandchildren were present. Everyone's eyes were on the very lovely Duchess of Cambridge looking wonderful in pale peach and hardly a royal bump. Outside the bells of the Abbey Church were being rung by the Westminster Abbey Company of Ringers. Then the moment we were all waiting for. The fanfare trumpeters of the Welsh Guards signalled the arrival of H.M. the Queen and H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh at the West Gate of the Abbey. They were

Those Young Choristers of 1953

Alongside the crown was the Gold Ampulla from which the anointing oil was poured. The scholars of the Westminster School sang the Vivat Regina Elizabeth, usually only heard at a coronation. We listened carefully to the anthem specially commissioned, by the 1953 choristers and composed by Bob Chilcott, who lives in the Wychwoods.

The service ended with the choir singing the Te Deum Laudamus by William Walton composed for the Queen's coronation. During this the Queen and the Royal Family slowly made their way down the nave passing close by us to the Great West Door, above which the coloured stained - glass windows shone like jewels revealing 1,000 years of the Abbey's history. The blend of organ, choirs of the Abbey and the Chapel Royal and the trumpeters of the Welsh Guards was sublime. After the service we gazed in wonder at the St. Edward's crown and the gold ampulla. A fellow St. George's chorister pointed out the very spot high up in the orchestra gallery where we, as young boys, had sung on that memorable day 60 years ago.

Allan and Brenda Ledger