

Jubilee Celebration in Avebury

On the driest day, namely Monday the 4th of June, of a particularly wet Diamond Jubilee weekend, Avebury went overboard with a Big Lunch Party that was held on its Sportsfield. Everyone from Avebury, Trusloe, West Kennett and Beckhampton was invited. In a sumptuous marquee, generously provided by Jeremy Sumbler's company Covered Occasions, 24 round tables were set up with 10 spaces each. There was still room for an excellent bar, run by Avebury Club and manned by Alan Blake and helpers, and an elaborately-decorated table set out by Sally Nelson for two Jubilee cakes surrounded by countless cup cakes, beautifully iced.

Between 200 and 250 villagers attended, many dressed in extraordinary versions of the Union Jack, each bringing a plate of food to be shared around and bartered for! The well-decorated tables, organised by Mary Beale and the WI overlooked by personalised bunting supplied by Susanna Bailey, groaned. After warnings about Health and Safety, eloquently expressed by Judy Farthing who was also on the organising committee, lunch proceeded and was followed by a vociferous Loyal Toast, the National Anthem being accompanied by the Lomas trio of trombones.

Carelessly organised by the M.C., Peter Beale, the entertainment began with three 'brassy' numbers by the Lomas trio, followed by four -part songs performed by the Avebury Vocal Ensemble casually conducted by the M.C., which included a rendering of 'Rule Britannia' encouraging much waving of flags and cheering. A surprise item turned out to be a resurrection of Elvis Presley, who with the unexpected but welcome soprano help of Kirsty Nelson and accompanied by Robin Nelson, had the audience (many of an age!) singing with gusto. The loudest entertainment was provided by Onyx in the persons of Tom and Kerry Blower, almost hidden by the plethora of microphones and other electronics. This really got the party going even to the extent that in the early evening many of the organising committee 'lost the plot' and danced as if there were no tomorrow.

At tea-time the Jubilee cakes were cut by Heather Peak-Garland and Sandra Hues to wild acclaim. During the tea interval, Janet Polack, a joint Chairman of the organising committee introduced a silent auction for three fruit trees possibly for inclusion in a community orchard in Avebury. During all of this Dominic Fry occupied some 20 to 30 athletic youngsters in a Kwik cricket match, whilst other children's activities were ably organised by Kate, his wife.

The entertainers were on again after tea. They were followed late in the afternoon by a gasp for breath and a take-away fish and chips provided cheaply by the Red Lion. Festivities continued in the Avebury Club thanks again to Alan Blake and his helpers with a skittle competition and at 10pm a beacon was kindly provided and lit by Tony Farthing on Waden Hill bringing to a close a marvellous day which undoubtedly brought the community even closer together.

A peal of bells was rung during the day and there was also a superb exhibition in St James' Church. It showed old photographs and, following interviews by Diana Holmes, descriptions by Avebury people of life over the years, stressing the continuity with current villagers.

This was an historic venture which had its origins earlier in the year with a committee of those already mentioned and chaired by the two Jans, Williamson and Polack. Many other worthy citizens gave their time to help, and generous donations were received from the Community Shop, the Henge Shop, the Social Centre, the Parochial Church Council, the Avebury Society, Avebury Parish Council and the Marlborough Area Board.

Apologies are due for any left out of the plaudits - there were so many!

Peter Beale