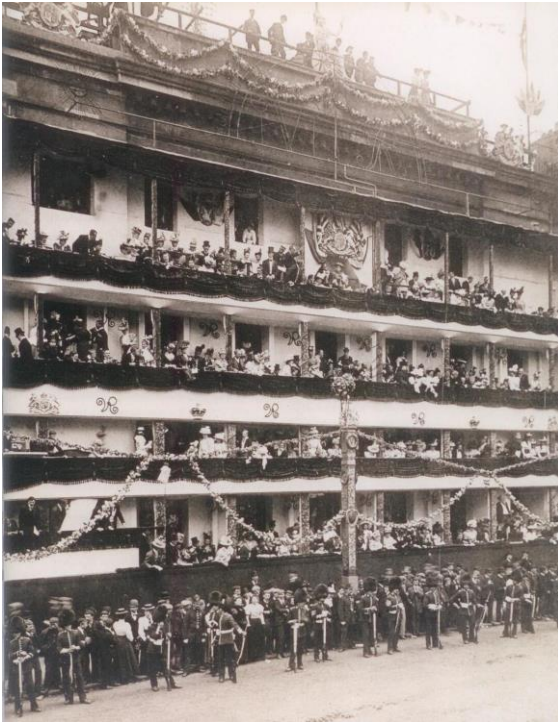


Manuscript of the Month
June 2012

Photograph of Hoare's Bank, Fleet Street, on Diamond Jubilee Day, 22 June 1897



In 1897, Queen Victoria became the first British monarch to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. To mark the occasion, an exhaustive programme of events was planned, culminating in a grand procession through the streets of London on 22 June. That day, central London was virtually unrecognisable. Temporary balconies obscured nearly every building along the six mile route. Grandstands towered over Constitution Hill and Trafalgar Square. Floral garlands, flags and bunting criss-crossed the streets. And, as this photograph shows, Hoare's Bank played its part.

Preparations for the Diamond Jubilee were underway at Hoare's by April 1897. Architect J W Penfold (designer of the hexagonal post box) was commissioned to draw up plans for temporary balconies capable of accommodating up to 400 people, while the partners met with their chief clerk to finalise the guest list. After a prolonged discussion, it was decided to invite just family, staff and a select

number of others, mostly business contacts such as lawyers, although approximately seventy places were set aside to satisfy some of the many unsolicited requests for seats. One of the more unusual of these came from Lord Frederick Brudenell-Bruce: *Have you by any chance a spare seat where a Photographer could place himself at your Bank so as to get a shot at the 'Civic procession'? (Jubilee Day). It will be a Keograph or moving picture of the whole show, if the sun will only shine on all as it ought. The Camera does not take up more than the ordinary room & if you can manage it by any possibility you will greatly oblige me.* Presumably the Hoares agreed, for on the far left of this photograph (second balcony up) there is indeed a cameraman. And remarkably he was not alone. Despite film then being in its earliest infancy, an estimated forty film cameras were placed along the route. Fragments of their footage survive to this day.

As tickets were required to access Fleet Street on the day of the procession, guests were asked to provide the names of those who would be attending. One local solicitor asked permission to bring his two teenage sons: *they will I know much appreciate the sight and you will find them quiet lads.* Others nominated their wives or mothers. And nearly all were only too glad to accept. As Rev James Hoare of Godstone, Surrey, wrote: *I must thank you & your partners for the generous offer of 2 seats in view of the procession on June 22 the value of which can scarcely be estimated when we read of 50 guineas [c.£4.5K today] being offered for a seat!* In the end, over 500 people were to cram into the bank on 22 June.

The night before the procession, Fleet Street bristled with anticipation. Spectators began laying siege to the best vantage points at midnight and by 3am both the projecting stones outside the Law Courts branch of the Bank of England (now the Old Bank of England public house) and the entire length of the pavement were packed. From dawn, *a stream of wagons, omnibuses, brakes, and hansoms, full of sightseers, made their way along the route, retarding the progress of the*

newspaper carts as they rattled along to catch the mails. Every now and then bands of youths or men trooped by singing 'God Save the Queen' to a cacophonous accompaniment... Factory girls, arm in arm, danced upon the pavements; women seated upon hand-barrows were wheeled along in triumph...cyclists threaded their way slowly through the streets, among them some ladies who received from the bystanders equivocal cheers. (The Times, 23 June 1897). At 8.30am the street was closed to traffic and ticket holders had just half an hour longer to get into position. After that, all anyone could do was wait.

An hour or so later, the procession got underway. Unlike the Golden Jubilee, which had focussed on Queen Victoria and her family, the organisers of the Diamond Jubilee chose to place the Empire at the heart of its celebrations. Heading the procession, therefore, were troops drawn from all four corners of the globe: Hussars from Canada and Niger, Mounted Rifles from Queensland and Umvoti, Zaptiehs from Cyprus, Artillerymen from Jamaica, Infantrymen from Malta and Hong Kong. Behind them marched battalions of British troops, followed by an assortment of aides de camp and foreign attachés. Finally, there appeared seventeen open carriages. The last of these, drawn by eight cream ponies and escorted by a detachment of Indian troops, carried the Queen, dressed in black silk and clutching a white lace parasol. Slowly the procession wove its way westwards to St Paul's Cathedral. There it stopped for a brief open-air thanksgiving service – the 78 year old Victoria was deemed too frail and arthritic to manage the steps – before crossing over London Bridge and working its way back to Buckingham Palace in time for a late lunch.

Photographs of that day are inevitably black and white, making it easy to forget what a colourful spectacle the procession must have been. The flowers, the flags, the crowds in their summer finery and the uniforms of the 45,000 troops on show would have made an indelible impression on all who witnessed them. *The Times* described how, as the procession rounded Hyde Park Corner into Piccadilly, a *stream of gold and scarlet flowed like a sunlit river*. The noise too must have been deafening: cannon roars in Hyde Park, peal after peal of church bells, military bands, Highland pipers and, of course, the crowds – hundreds of thousands of people, on pavements, bridges, balconies, even roofs, all cheering and waving white handkerchiefs for hours on end.

Fleet Street on Jubilee day was decked out predominantly in purple and gold. Palms, flags and evergreens smothered the Griffin at Temple Bar and floral garlands swooped along from one end of the street to the other. The *Daily Telegraph* office – *adorned most tastefully with green and mauve festoons, interspersed with graceful palms* – was universally praised. But, *The Times* noted, *the offices of the Black and White, the Sporting Life, and the Morning Advertiser compelled admiration, as did also Messrs Hoare's bank, which was conspicuous in crimson and white*. And as night fell, gas-powered illuminations bathed the street in colour once more. Child's Bank opted for a display of opal, amber and pale blue lamps, while above Hoare's the letters VR were picked out in coloured lights. Crowds lingered on to view the illuminations and public houses were given special dispensation to remain open until 2.30am, much to the horror of temperance campaigners.

Although public attention naturally centred on London, Victoria's Jubilee was celebrated worldwide. Thanksgiving services were held in cities as diverse as Cairo and Budapest, Cape Town built a Jubilee Hospital and the Indian authorities pardoned 9,500 convicts. Closer to home, towns and villages across Britain revelled in their own festivities: processions and tea parties, picnics and sports days. The Clark family, owners of Paisley's famous Anchor thread mill, treated every one of the town's 13,000 children to a feast of pastries, buns, biscuits and sweets, followed by an afternoon of games in the surrounding fields. The Jubilee also generated large sums for good causes. Newcastle raised enough to rebuild the city infirmary, 1,500 poor children in Manchester and

Salford were given new clothes and a Dundee optician undertook to provide sixty old men and women with free spectacles.

The Hoares spent a total of £1,501-4-2 (c.£133K today) on their Jubilee celebrations. Accounts show that £620 was paid to carvers and gilders M W Edgley (conveniently based next door at 40-41 Fleet Street), presumably for the elaborate coats of arms that embellished the balconies, but possibly also for the hundreds of chairs that would have been required. A further £457-10-0 went to builders Hall Beddall & Co, while John Edgington & Co were paid £88-5-0 for flags and bunting. Guests were sent specially designed invitations and provided with both breakfast and lunch. Judging from the letters the partners subsequently received, the day was a resounding success, although as solicitor John W Dawson pointed out: *It was a wonder to us how you could have effected such a transformation & I am afraid it could only have been at considerable inconvenience for some time to the Even tenor of your way.* Another guest summed up the thoughts of many when he reflected: *we shall remember [the day] all our lives with a feeling that we too have helped to make history!*

