

OUR HISTORY

The Thirties

From the Memories of Peggy Bennett 1921 - 2000

The Thirties were an interesting decade for me, as I was older and can remember something about them. "Flappers" of the Twenties were still much in evidence with their Eton cropped hair or tight waves, decorative head bands, long cigarette holders and incredibly ugly (I thought) dresses with waists around their hips, knee length skirts, lots of fringes and feathers, high heeled shoes with 5 band heels and silk stockings (very daring). This was all a tremendous change from the preceding years with ankle length skirts etc – so it was impressed upon me – but the pendulum had begun to swing with a vengeance away from Victorian/Edwardian standards.

The Thirties I remember as a time of economic depression, the R101 disaster, the Quetta earthquake, wild parties, superficial gaiety (which, as a child, even I was aware of), and perhaps the most significant of all – although at the time I do not think many people attached much importance to it – the emergence in Germany of Hitler. His Fascist party soon had quite a formidable following in England, and I remember a few locals who were seriously interested.

However, there were other distractions. King George V was seriously ill in 1929, and for a time his recovery was seriously in doubt. Eventually he was well enough to convalesce in Bognor, which led to his famous remark about the town. At school we treated the King's almost fatal illness with due solemnity, and most girls (and Collyers boys) wore black armbands on their blazers. No doubt children all over the country did the same, but it was certainly going over the top to a great extent. I remember my mother was somewhat annoyed when I demanded some black ribbon for an armband, muttering fervently that she hoped I would grow up soon – which only made me more determined of course. What we schoolgirls would have done or worn had the King died then I cannot imagine, but after that illness King George V was never a fit man; there was one crisis about his health after another.