

CARDALL'S CORNER

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Dances and Celebrations

By Helen Morris



There have always been memorable shows and dances to entertain the people of Southam, and some residents have had their reminiscences recorded by Southam Heritage Collection.

Doreen Smith remembered that her father, Clement Smith, the Midland Bank manager after WW2, started a youth club called 'The Sparklets' based at the Old Court House (now the disused building next to The Original Factory Shop). The young people travelled around the area giving concerts. Dances were very popular then and Mr Smith was instrumental in getting a sprung dancefloor put in at the Parish Hall (now known as Warwick House).

In the 1950s the main place where young Southamites met was on the dancefloor. Phyllis King met her future husband at a dance and remembered the dances in the old village hall where young people learnt to dance from their elders. Her favourite dance was the Old Time Waltz. Other dances were The Quickstep, The Lancers (a long Victorian dance where the men got the girls 'off their feet',) and the Pally Glide where the dancers moved slowly, arm in arm in rows with a lot of forward and back steps round the room.

Dances in aid of the Church were cheap to run as the Craven Arms Hall, by courtesy of Mr Slack, was often free of charge. Jack Cardall's Band (see photo) frequently played for no fee, and people brought homemade refreshments. Church dances were very formal affairs. The ladies wore long gowns despite the post-war scarcity of dress material. Tickets were ten shillings and sixpence so Mr Murray, the Rector, must have been very grateful for the amount of money raised. Phyllis remembers preparing the food at her home with Mrs Parker, Joan Smith, Olwen Thorne and Louie Griffin. Their husbands collected tickets and handed round the food.

Frances Whitehall, who was a Land Girl in Southam, remembered dances at The Parish Hall. She worked for a while at Fenny Compton for a farmer – Mr Lambert. He used to lend her his car, and she remembered once when the dance finished at twelve, coming out to find the car missing. It had rolled away and got caught in a metal fence. Sergeant Palmer used to wait outside keeping an eye on things at midnight but he didn't speak to her at the time - if he had, he would have found that she didn't have a driving licence!

On June 2nd 1953 Queen Elizabeth's Coronation was celebrated all day and at 10pm Jacky Graham remembered there was a torchlight procession through the town. At the Recreation Ground in the shadow of the floodlit Church tower, there was a bonfire and firework display. It was 'great fun' and 'God Save the Queen' was sung at 11pm accompanied by the town band.

If you are interested in finding out more about local history or have memories to share, contact Southam Heritage Collection. The Collection is housed in Vivian House, Market Hill and is currently open on Tuesday mornings from 10am to 12 noon. Contact: 01926 613503 email southamheritage@hotmail.com or find us on Facebook.

