

RETROSPECTIVES



Front Cover of Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Scrapbook, 1953.
Finedon Junior Girls' School

The Journal of

FINEDON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

May 2023



JACQUI MINCHINTON
9th October 1947 - 24th January 2023

In January we sadly heard of the death of Jacqui, our Society President.

Although not Northamptonshire 'born and bred' Jacqui quickly embedded herself into the life of Finedon, and the county, following her arrival here in the 1980s.

Jacqui initially worked as assistant archivist at the Northamptonshire Record Office and later in the Museum and Archive service. She was well liked, and her archive skills were well respected within the County's archive and heritage network. Jacqui also served as a trustee to the Northamptonshire Record Society and Finedon Star Hall.

In the 1990s she ran local history classes in Finedon and Irthlingborough which resulted in the establishment of thriving societies in both towns. She was a founder member and first Chairman of the Finedon Local History Society. Following her retirement as Chairman, in acknowledgement of her contribution towards the establishment of the Society, Jacqui was given the honorary title of President. As this role does not appear in our Society's constitution, she will not be replaced.

Jacqui was an active member of Finedon St Mary's church choir and the PCC, serving as Synod representative for some years. She was also a member of the Mothers' Union, Townswomen's Guild and Finedon Over 60s Club.

I don't think anyone would disagree with the view that Jacqui was a kind and caring Christian lady.

Carolyn Smith

Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Scrapbook, 1953 Finedon Junior Girls' School

Mick Britton

As the coronation of King Charles III is on 6th May, I have taken the opportunity to reflect on life in Finedon 70 years ago, at the time of the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II, on 2nd June 1953.

The society has in its archive a 1953 Coronation Scrapbook that was kindly donated by Tom Jeffries, the son of Mrs Grace Jeffries, the then headmistress of Finedon Junior Girls' School in Church Street. As a 'special effort' for the Coronation, the girls of the top class discovered a great deal about Finedon. They contacted many of the farmers and business owners, as well as the clubs and the cinema in the town, and obtained all the information they could.

What follows is a small selection of their own work, in their own words, with newspaper cuttings, and photographs they collected and collated for this wonderful 'time-capsule' project.

Clubs

Allen Road Working Men's Club

'This club first originated in the dwelling house occupied by Mr Boddington, next door to the fish shop in Allen Road, fifty-six years ago [1897]. The membership was under fifty and the first steward was Mr Tom Lilley.

After a struggle by these gallant few members, the new premises known as the Finedon Working Men's Club was opened three years later, a few yards further down Allen Road. The first steward in the new club was Mr George Coles.

From then on, during the next half century, the club never looked back. It is known throughout the county as one of our finest social and sporting clubs. Amongst its many sporting records, skittles, and air gun shooting are prominent. Many cups and trophies have been won by their members taking part in these activities.

Three years ago, the Jubilee of the club was held, and many original members were present.'

Gladstone Club

'This is the oldest of the clubs in the village of Finedon. The membership is four hundred and fifty. The club was formed in May 1888 and was affiliated to the Union later in the same year, the actual date is not obtainable.'

The present premises were built in 1896 by local labour and the Jubilee was held in 1946. The President, ex-Alderman J.T. Hawthorne presided at both functions, and still takes an interest in the work and welfare of the club although he is ninety-four years old. Mr Stewart is the steward of the club.'

Conservative Club

'This club has a membership of three hundred and four financial members and thirty-six honorary members. Albert Bollard is the steward.'

Finedon Old Band Club

'This club was opened on the 22nd March 1898 in the High Street, in the premises formerly occupied by the Gladstone Club, to give support to Finedon Old Prize Band. These premises were burned down in 1918 and the present club was opened in 1919. Additions were made in 1920.'

The records of the club were lost in the fire, so it is not possible to give any further information.'

Factories

A.H. Bailey & Sons Ltd.

'The firm was founded by Albert Henson Bailey and Samuel Elson in 1888 as Bailey & Elson. In 1900 it was changed to Bailey & Son and in 1919 it became A.H. Bailey and Sons Ltd.'

'The original factory was in Obelisk Road, in a house which is now occupied by Mr Branning. In 1890 the present factory was built [on the junction of Mulso Road and Wellingborough Road and demolished in the early 1960s].'

'Twelve women and twenty-three men are employed. Army footwear, safety boots for mineworkers and agriculture workers are made. Boots are exported to the United States of America, Canada, Africa, and the West Indies.'

'During the 1939 – 1945 War the factory made 52,611 pairs of boots for Army, Navy and Ordnance requirements. Thousands were also made for general workers wear, and miners and heavy trade workers'.

'Production now includes Army, Ordnance footwear for Government requirements, also for general trade at home and for export. During our history they have shipped boots almost all parts of the world; they will not be able to do this again as their markets are closing their doors to us in favour of home production.'

J.R Gammidge & Co. Ltd.

'Started by A.H. Minney and J.R. Gammidge in 1929. One hundred and forty-two women are employed, including forty-nine at Little Harrowden. There are also one hundred and sixty-eight male employees. This factory manufactures men's Goodyear welted soles.'

'This factory began in a very small way in Affleck Bridge making screwed and stitched boots. It moved to Summerlee Road in 1933.'

Tower Boot Company

'This company was founded by G.T. Pearson Esq. and T.H Minney Esq. in 1917. After a few years the partnership was dissolved and G.T. Pearson and his sons carried on the business under the same name, Tower Boot Company. G.T. Pearson passed away in September 1952. The firm now belongs to his five sons. The type of work carried out is men's medium class boots and shoes.'

The girls also recorded eight other Finedon companies in the scrapbook: The Debdale Leather Company; Roy Bailey; L.M.P. Tanners Ltd; MacFarlane, Carman & Lewis Limited; T.H. Minney Ltd; Arthur Nutt & Co. Ltd; Rockleigh Shoe Company Ltd and Ideal Clothiers. This is an indicator of the high level of industry, markedly in the boot and shoe trade, within Finedon in 1953.

Watts Cinema, Regent Street.

The girls' project also looked at the Regent Cinema, then in the ownership of FLHS member Tommy Watts's family. They wrote:

'This cinema was started in 1928 and films were shown in the Star Hall before the Regent Cinema was opened. The cinema is owned by Watts Cinemas Ltd. This company owns two other cinemas, one in Burton Latimer and one in Irthlingborough.'

'The Regent Cinema seats 269 people and there are four changes to the programme every week.

'Films are shown on a beaded screen and the projectors are Kaylee. The cinema makes its own electricity by means of an oil engine and one-part mains. It is licensed by Wellingborough Urban District Council.

'By the British Quotas Act 1929 [and the Cinematography Act, 1927] every cinema is bound by the law [to protect the British film industry] to show 30% British films first picture, and 25% second feature. Quarterly returns are made to the Board of Trade stating the number of admissions, cash takings, entertainment tax, film hire etc.'

Newspaper Cuttings

The scrapbook also includes several newspaper cuttings from the Evening Telegraph. One such cutting covers a Coronation tree planting ceremony on Thrapston Road on held on Thursday, November 26th. The ceremony was a joint event by all the then four schools in Finedon.

'Children plant four trees Finedon scholars' Coronation gift'

'About six hundred children from Finedon's schools, with members of Wellingborough Urban Council, including Mr H.C.L. Warwick and Mrs Warwick, attended a tree planting ceremony on Thrapston Road this morning.

'Money for the four trees, all Japanese flowering cherries, was subscribed by the school children but the planting had to be postponed because it was out of season.

'Introduced by Mr J. Wells, headmaster of the Junior Boys' school, Mr Warwick reprimanded the children about damage done to trees in Wellingborough. He pointed out that the trees belonged to the children and appealed to them to set an example and not do any damage.

'You do it when you are not thinking,' he said. Mentioning the number of trees damaged in the urban district, he commented: It is no good Wellingborough ratepayers, and your mothers and fathers, having to pay for damage to trees.'

'Then on behalf of the town he thanked the children for their gift which he said, would help beautify Finedon Ward.'

'Seven-year-olds Christine Underwood and Peter Joyce planted the Infants School tree, Michael Stephens deputised for the Junior Boys' School: 15-year-old Marion Richardson and 14-year-old Roger Pinnock handled the spade for the Secondary Modern School and, for the Junior Girls' School, ten-year old Jaqueline West and nine-year old Glenys Biggs planted the fourth tree.'



Christine Underwood and Peter Joyce plant the Infant's School tree.
Evening Telegraph

A second, but undated, newspaper cutting has the title 'Open Day at Finedon School', it reads:

'Managers at Finedon Junior Girls' School, parents of the 146 pupils, former scholars and friends attended the Open Day on Tuesday.

'In the afternoon they saw a pageant of famous British women, dancing displays, physical training exercises and heard a selection of tunes played on recorders. The work done by the pupils, all between the ages of seven and eleven, was on show in the classrooms and a lot of interest was shown in the floral and needlework exhibits.'

'Mr. W.H. Patterson congratulated the scholars and staff on behalf of the managers and visitors. The school, formerly a charitable establishment, was founded in 1714 for a number of resident girls to receive instruction in scripture, needlework and lacemaking.'



From the Girls' School Coronation Scrapbook (no names are listed)
'Pageant of Famous British Women. Form 4. 1953.'

The scrapbook also includes reports of local shops, including several that will be known to many of you, Mr Jones of Allen Road, Bridgeford's Stores in the High Street, Shelton's Butchers on Affleck Bridge and Mr Collis, the greengrocer, on Wellingborough Road. The list goes on!

Seventy years ago Finedon would have been a more self-supporting town compared with that of today. Many Finedon people would have been employed by local companies, particularly within the shoe industry. The Co-operative Society stores in Finedon, as well as the wide range of small shopkeepers and service providers, would have met most of the needs of local families without the need to travel to Wellingborough by bus; family cars were uncommon. So much of our lives now would have been unbelievable and astonishing to the Finedon residents of 1953.

The Girls' School Coronation Scrapbook certainly gives a precious and invaluable insight into Finedon's not so recent past!

The Kenmuir Road, Ewenfield Road & Wellingborough Road Coronation Celebrations

Mick Britton

The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, in 1953, was a major event to celebrate. While I have not been able to identify a major event in Finedon encompassing the whole of the town, local newspaper archives of the period, and items in our own archive, detail a series of official events as well as localised street parties comprising either single or groups of Finedon roads.

The Kenmuir Road, Ewenfield Road and Wellingborough Road group, under the direction of its organising committee, booked Finedon Town Hall for Saturday 6th June in which to hold their celebration party.

Two of our members, Harry Nicholls and Ron Clayton, attended the party as young children. Harry's father (also named Harry) was the treasurer of the committee, while Ron's parents Wilf and Barbara served on the Organising Committee.

Other members of the Organising Committee were: (NB: the programme give's men's forename initials; at that time, married women were addressed by title and husbands initial) Secretary E. Boddington, Chairman F. Brown. Committee Members Mesdames F. Brown, J. Sheppard, A. Ager, H. Pettitt, S. Twelvetree, B. Clements, R. Barnard. Messrs J. Sheppard, P. Hodges, B. Clements, L. Amey and the Revd. D. Brookes. The event began with a tea at 4.45pm. This sumptuous feast comprised ham, tongue and pork with



salads, sausage rolls, pork pie, cream cakes and pastries, cheese and biscuits, bread and butter with a range of sauces, pickles and salad creams. All of this was followed by strawberries and cream. The rationing that had been in place until recently must have seemed a world away!

After the meal a toast to Her Majesty the Queen was given and the event then focused on the children, firstly with the presentation of souvenir metal money boxes in the form of a Coronation throne to each child. I am pleased to report that both Harry and Ron, still have their money boxes they were given seventy years ago!

**Around the Town
Finedon Coronation Celebrations**



Milner Road



Albert Road



Milner Road

The two Milner Road photographs are from the collection of Rosemary Pearson. The Albert Road photograph is from the late Derek Richardson.

There then followed a session of games and dancing organised by Jack Sheppard and Len Amey. Quaintly, the programme records that, *'party hats will be supplied to all'*. Music was provided by Hirst Cuttell and his band and the evening continued with a children's talent contest and a children's fancy dress competition. Entertainment by Walter Ashton, a ventriloquist and magician, rounded off the evening. The celebrations closed at 11.30pm with the singing of the National Anthem.



Top row, l to r: Ted Boddington, Harry Nicholls, Jenny Hodges, Phil Hodges, Lois Brookes (sister of) Revd. Donald Brookes, 'Raja' Bailey, Fred Brown (wearing the mortar board and partially obscured by flowers), Lil Brown, Vera and Jack Sheppard. Front and centre: Barbara Clayton (wearing a crown), the young Ron on his mother's knee and Wilf Clayton (behind and to the right of Ron). The lady to the right of Wilf Clayton is Annie York, Ron's grandmother.

My thanks to both Ron and Harry for their help and assistance with this article, including providing me with photographs of their Coronation Money Boxes and the group photograph above.

Medieval Finedon: Part 1

Stephen Swailes

There is a lot of material around to tell us about the medieval village. The church and its architecture are usually well-documented, as are the names of the clergy appointed from the early 13th century. Manorial history is easy to find although it is often quite complex, and we usually only know who owned the manor, or parts of it, at various times. The lives of the dominant people who lived there, typically lords of the manor, are sometimes documented. These sources, however, are often very dry and tell us little about other people and about what life was like for the average resident and the experiences they had. As such, this is the first of two articles for the Journal looking at medieval Finedon. The first part looks at Finedon around a thousand years ago and by studying some early tax returns. The second part will look at other early records that identify some of the people who lived in the village around 600 to 700 years ago.

In setting the scene for Finedon in its neighbourhood a good place to start is to look at the placename and what it means. Finedon, anciently Tingdene and Thyngdon, means the valley ('den') where the assembly (the 'thing') took place. The change from Th- to F- occurred relatively recently and John Bridges' *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, compiled around 1720, tells us that the name was pronounced with a short 'i' as in 'fin' rather than the long 'i' used today.

By the time of the Conquest (1066), counties were divided into administrative areas called hundreds and this efficient system of local administration lasted for about a thousand years. At the time of Domesday Book (1086), Finedon was in the South Navereslund hundred and later in the Huxloe hundred after some of the hundreds were merged in the 14th century. Each hundred had a place where people met and where decisions were made and agreed. It is very likely that the meeting place for the two hundreds of South and North Navereslund was at Finedon and this was probably the case right from the start when hundreds were created around 920AD. In more northern counties hundreds were called wapentakes which derives from a Scandinavian word meaning taking and weapons to a meeting place and clashing them to signify assent and agreement. Navereslund probably means an area under the control of a Viking called Nafarr and the same personal name probably lies behind Navisford hundred which included Thrapston and Titchmarsh. Another feature of Finedon in the 11th century is that it was the centre of a royal estate (soke), held by Queen Edith, that was taken into the King's hands after the Conquest. The meeting place for Huxloe hundred was near the church at Lowick.

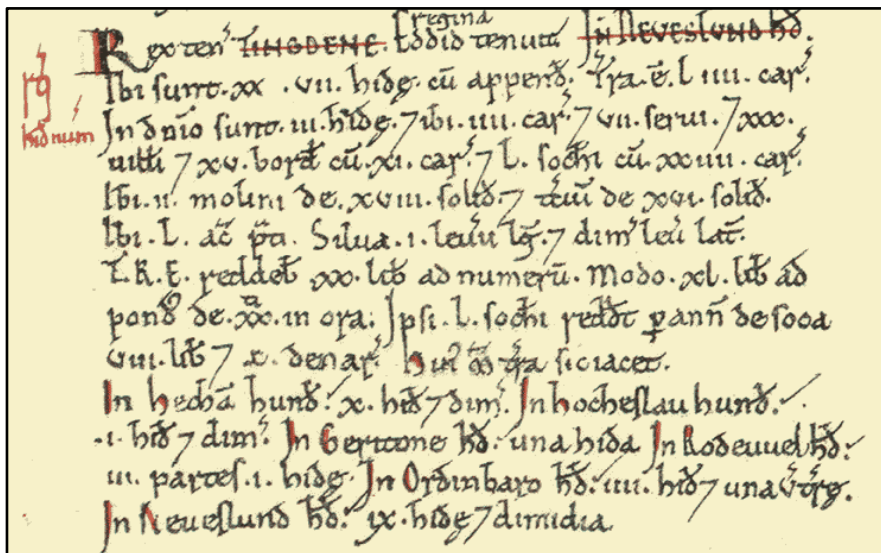
Another point of interest, a thousand or so years ago concerns what are known as the eight hundreds of Oundle. These covered the northeast of the county and Finedon was on the southern limit bounded by the river Ise. The eight hundreds were confirmed to Peterborough Abbey in 972AD and may represent a large area of land mentioned in a document called the *Tribal Hidage*, compiled sometime between the seventh and ninth centuries, that listed tribes and the amount of land they held. Finedon was chosen by the Abbot of Peterborough as the place from which the southern end of the eight hundreds would be administered.

Domesday Book

Like many other Midland villages, we learn something about what it was like from the Domesday Book (*DB*) which is a remarkable source of information for many English counties. To collect information for the great survey, the King's Commissioners toured the land and on arriving at a place asked what is here, who owns it, how much is it worth, and who owned it at the time of the Conquest? At Finedon (Tingdene), the Commissioners found that most of the land was held by the King, that on the King's land there were 54 ploughlands, 35 men's plough teams and four Lord's plough teams along with meadow, woodland, and three mills. A plough team was a unit of assessment relating to the area that could be ploughed by a team of eight oxen in a year. The annual value to the lord was 40 pounds but in 1066 it was worth 20 pounds. A much smaller unit of land was held by Bishop Geoffrey along with meadow and a mill worth one pound in 1086 and worth five shillings (a quarter of a pound) in 1066. In total, 105 households were recorded including seven slaves. On the matter of the three mills mentioned in 1086, it is unlikely that they were all on the Ise at Finedon given that manor lands were dispersed across other hundreds.

This Domesday description is quite revealing. First it tells us that with 105 households Finedon was among the top 20 per cent of places by recorded population. A multiplier of 4.5 is often used to estimate the actual population which in this case comes out at around 472 people. Wellingborough's recorded population was 48 and at Irthlingborough 33. Finedon was one of the largest places in the county at the time. Taking all this together it looks very much as if Finedon in ancient time was an important place. Second, the number of plough teams (35+4) was somewhat fewer than the amount of land available for ploughing (54 ploughlands). This may suggest that there was a lot more land available for cultivation which for some reason was not under the plough. However, interpreting *DB* is fraught with difficulties so there might be another explanation. The third take-away from *DB* is that we see evidence of the devastation caused by a marauding Danish army that swept through Northamptonshire in 1065 taking people into slavery, destroying buildings and

looting livestock and crops. That event explains why the estate values in 1066, a year after the devastation, are much lower than in 1086 by which time restocking and rebuilding had taken place.



The Domesday Book entry for Finedon beginning 'Rex ten Tingdene...' (The King holds Finedon...). Source: opendomesday.org

Taxes

Another source that tells us something about what the town was like comes from a general taxation, called a lay subsidy, held in 1301 to raise money for the King. Records survive for about half of the county and, luckily, include Huxloe hundred. From this we know the names of 136 taxpayers at Finedon who between them paid 256 shillings, 11 and a quarter pence in tax. The amount that each person paid is also listed. In addition, there were probably some people living in the village who managed to evade the taxmen and some who were exempt because they were too poor to pay anything. There was a general rule at the time that people should not be deprived of their living by the tax so the value of any tools and other equipment that people needed for their work was not taxed. As in 1086, Finedon was still a large settlement although the largest place in the surviving records for the county was Irthlingborough with 156 taxpayers. Burton Latimer had 104 taxpayers.

At Thyndene, Gilbert Biestun paid seven shillings and one and a half pence tax which was one of the highest individual amounts paid in the village and several other people called Biestun occur in the listing. In December 1301,

Henry, the son of Nicholas Byestoun of Thyngden, quarrelled with Geoffrey the son of Gilbert Byestoun, also of Thyngden, hit him on the head with an axe, after which Geoffrey died three days later. Henry quickly fled and Geoffrey's brother Thomas found the body. In 1303 Henry was pardoned for the killing by King Edward I on account of his good services in Scotland. Geoffrey does not appear in the 1301 list of taxpayers so perhaps he was either too young or he was not living in Finedon at the time. Henry was alive in 1330, however, since he appeared before justices and produced a King's Pardon for the killing.

Other people paying tax in 1301 include Alice, Richard and Robert at the well (ad fontem), Matilda on the hill (super montem), Miles and Margery at the bridge (ad pontem), John in the corner (in anglo), and Ivo the miller (molendinarius). Although there were a lot of changes in the spelling of surnames that occurred in a particular place, some endured for a long time and the list of taxpayers includes John Mac[a]jners and William Makales who, it seems more likely than not, were ancestors of the Mackerness family that were in Finedon in the 16th century and later. Alice Maucurneys is mentioned in a land transaction of 1332.

Another taxation of 1334 shows only the total amount paid by a village which in Finedon's case was four pounds and sixteen shillings. Burton Latimer, in contrast, contributed over six pounds twelve shillings, Irthlingborough almost eight pounds and Wellingborough nine pounds six shillings. Given the former large size of Finedon, this apparent drop in tax revenue relative to nearby villages is a little puzzling. It could be explained by a sudden drop in population occurring over the space of 33 years. Alternatively, it could be because local economic conditions had changed, so the average wealth of Finedon's people had fallen below average such that they paid less tax. Perhaps it was a bit of both. The shrinkage may have set-in though, because another taxation of 1523/4 lists 56 people eligible to pay tax, most of whom were men and indicative of a population around 250.

This summary shows that for several hundred years Finedon was a large and important village, much larger than others nearby. It was an ancient meeting place, the centre of a royal estate and where the Abbot of Peterborough chose to put his southern bailiff.

Additional sources used: Hart, C. (1989) 'Oundle: its province and eight hundreds', *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol VIII No. 1, pp. 3-23; Gover, J. and colleagues (1933) *The Place-names of Northamptonshire*; Sutherland, D. (1981) *The Eyre of Northamptonshire 1329-1330*, volume 1.

Reflecting Back

Janet Schmelzer

I wish my short-term memory was as good as my long-term one; every now and then I dredge up from my old brain some otherwise long-forgotten Finedon event. So here goes...

As a child I attended Sunday School at the Wesleyan Chapel, on Affleck Bridge, but one of my school friends belonged to the Methodist Chapel, on Wellingborough Road, and I guess this was how I came to attend this event at what we used to call the 'top chapel' because of its location.

It must have been towards the end of World War Two, when I was no more than 12 years old, that I learned a musical event was being held at the 'top chapel' and it was free and open to everyone.



Finedon Methodist Chapel
Postcard from the Girls' School Coronation Scrapbook

In those days, as some of you may recall, being able to listen to live music in our small town was a rare occasion and as we had heard of a concert being held one weekday evening at that chapel my friend and I didn't intend to miss the opportunity.

It turned out to be gospel singing by a small group of black American servicemen. In those wartime days we were used to seeing American servicemen in the town at weekends when they were brought in from one of the US bases a few miles away for a few hours of recreation, and probably visits to the local pubs.

At the age I was then I don't suppose I gave any thought to the fact that these young black American servicemen must have been apprehensive, perhaps nervous, at the prospect of performing in front of an audience of white people, because I'm sure this was a very rare occurrence for them in their own country.

Back then the US Military was still strictly segregated and, thank goodness, things have finally changed for black people. However, I've begun to wonder just how this musical event at a chapel in Finedon came about? Perhaps a Chaplain or a Liaison Officer at the Air Force Base contacted various churches in the area telling them about the 'gospel singing airmen,' or perhaps a member of Finedon Methodist Chapel had heard of them and made overtures to have them perform at the Chapel? I find myself being very curious about this and I feel it must have been arranged by an exchange of letters in those days. While there were certainly telephones at the US Military Bases, I do know from my days working at the Kettering Exchange that back then there were very few telephones in Finedon. Finedon and a couple of other villages were serviced by the Kettering Telephone Exchange and we operators knew from lighted indicators from which village the calls originated.

I imagine the welcoming committee of the Chapel served the 'Black American Singing Airmen' cups of tea and made them feel as welcome as anyone else and those young men must have been pleasantly surprised, and they certainly had 'a tale to tell' when they wrote home.

I recall the singing was enjoyed and appreciated by all those present, though I do not recall any applause, and I suspect that applause was not acceptable in houses of worship in those days as it is now.

Overleaf. Carnival Float. l to r. ?, Francis Hopkins, Dorothy Clegg, Joan Dunkley (née Twelvetree), Jessie Clarke, Mrs Oliver, Doris Allen, Ruth Hobbs, Ann Clarke, Pat Britchford. Photograph from Doris Emerton (née Allen)

Back Page. School Outing to the Houses of Parliament, 1953. From the Girls' School Coronation Scrapbook. No names are listed.

Finedon Townswomen's Guild



Carnival 1953. Finedon Townswomen's Guild, 'The Elizabethans.'

1948



2023

FINEDON TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Finedon Guild and we plan to commemorate this milestone in our history by compiling a celebratory book of photographs, highlights and personal memories to be published in the late summer or early autumn of this year.

We do need to gauge the likely level of interest. If you would like to know more, with no financial commitment at this stage, please contact Sue Nicholls by email at harry.nicholls@btinternet.com or 01933 680209 to express your interest and receive details as they become known.

