

**AN OBJECT OF INTEREST FROM HUNSTANTON
HERITAGE CENTRE
June 2022**

**HUNSTANTON &
DISTRICT
CIVIC SOCIETY**

Coronation chair



In light of the Platinum Jubilee exhibition we thought it might be of interest to include a picture and description of the chair that we have been lent to display in the Heritage Centre. Jill Bowett has kindly lent us this chair which is one of about 8,000 that were used to seat those attending the Coronation in 1953. It is in fabulous condition and well worth having a look at. The following are extracts from what we have found 'on-line'.

Chairs like this accommodated guests at the Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953.

They were later sold by the government to attendees. Naturally, there is a pecking order to these things: chairs were more desirable; stools were supposedly used for less important guests. Coronation chairs for George V also exist but, apparently, are different and, so far, have eluded this observer's eye.

Both feature the royal cipher in gold thread and are stamped underneath with the sovereign's initials.

When the chairs were originally sold, they were offered first to the individuals who had been in the congregation at Westminster Abbey.

Here is an abstract of that announcement and discussion from the House of Lords:

The Earl of Munster: My Lords, my right honorable friend the Minister of Works wishes to inform guests who attended the Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey that the chairs and stools used by the congregation may now be purchased ... chairs will cost 7-10s-0d and stools 4-7s-6d each, including packing and delivery ... applications may also be made for the purchase of carpets and damask frontals ...etc., etc.

In 1902, at the coronation of Edward VII, guests were invited to buy the chairs to keep as souvenirs, and this charming practice has continued to the present day.

Elizabeth II (1953) chairs feature legs in silvered oak with upholstery in Royal Blue. The chairs are stamped with the royal monogram.

The chairs were made by various makers, mostly from High Wycombe. In Bradford 4,000 yards of velvet was produced at Listers Mill to cover 2,000 chairs and 5,700 stools, made of oak and beech, for the congregation.

In June 1953 Daphne du Maurier wrote to a friend:

I did have a seat in the Abbey (I wore an old evening dress that looked quite harmless) and got quite a thrill out of it all when the actual moment came....

To elaborate on what she said, the correct dress was for the women to wear ankle-length dresses.

Information from Westminster Abbey:

As coronations are state occasions, the archives of Westminster Abbey don't hold a great deal of information about the detailed seating arrangements at the Queen's Coronation, although we are asked about these chairs quite often. We have a printed list of attendees which records the block in which people were seated, but I'm afraid there is no way of correlating the numbers on the surviving chairs to the people who sat on them. Whatever the system was, it was not as straightforward as giving each seat a unique number. I have not encountered any seats numbered in the thousands even though there were over 8,000 attendees; rather it would appear that the seats were numbered within their blocks and so there will often be more than one chair with a particular number.