



THATCHAM MAYORS

OVER THE YEARS

A collection of thoughts and memories from some
former Mayors of Thatcham



Jenny and I had an amazing year as Mayor and Mayoress, and it's a real privilege to be part of so many activities going on across our amazing town.

The Mayoral chain grants access to all kinds of events – not just the big civic ones (like the Festival, Fun Day, Remembrance Parade and Warming up for Christmas) but invitations to clubs and schools, music and drama performances, coffee mornings, shop openings – the list goes on. And you never know what the next invitation will be for.

One of the great things about being mayor is bringing people together – meeting someone who needs something and introducing them to someone who can help. Or finding out why we can't help and trying to do something about it. Wearing the chain is a way in: it gives you the opportunity to start those conversations. And that's why it's so important for the town to have a Mayor.

Councillor Mark Lillycrop, Mayor of Thatcham 2023-24



The position of becoming a mayor, you become a representative of the town of Thatcham, a town you are proud to support as a community representative.

For me organising the children's mayor medal which saw over 200 local children receive this award.

Organising a ABbA night in St Mary's church for volunteers and charities that support the interest of Thatcham residents.

The opening of the Apple orchard at Thatcham lakes.

And the Christmas lights when I had the support of a young impaired girl help with switching on with the lights.

Yes there were many events including the centennial of the first world war and the attendance of representing the town of Thatcham at many services.

The proud feeling of leading the procession through the town with supporters and volunteers to lay wreaths at the memorial service.

The Christmas church service.

I could mention many more events etc I enjoyed, there were well over 143 and each had their special occasion.

The duties of becoming a mayor are important. Your fellow members on the council select you for the work you do in office. With a support team behind you your yearly experience will enrich many lives.

Gary Johnson, Mayor of Thatcham 2014-15



Three main events stand out! My memories of becoming mayor included being chauffeured to RAF / USAF Mildenhall and flown out to Tempelhof Germany with 12 other dignitaries from around the country in a USAF

B 737. We stayed in the Berlin Embassy and were taken on tours of the Berlin Wall and Ramstein Airbase! All this was courtesy of USAF Greenham Common. I also saw the departure of the last cruise missiles from the base back to the USA.



I took a sponsored walk from Thatcham to Hungerford and back to raise money for a porta cabin for the youth of Thatcham to meet in! And held a painting competition for pupils from Kennet School to celebrate the reopening of Monkey Marsh Lock west of Thatcham rail station on the Kennet & Avon Canal!

Keith Woodhams, Mayor of Thatcham 1990-91



I had two civic emergencies during my time as Mayor. The first was a panic about over a heated oxyacetylene cylinder one evening. The local residents were evacuated to the Kennet gymnasium where they spent the night on mattresses supplied by TTC. I was not alerted until the morning when I went immediately to the sports centre. Some people had left for work but the several left were very pleased to see the Mayor. I think it meant that the Council (not just the officers) were concerned about them. With the morning it became clear that the cylinder was no longer a danger and they were allowed home. The relief and pleasure on their faces when the Mayor appeared has stayed with me. Similarly I represented the Town at the memorial service for the victims of the train crash. The survivors there were relieved to tell of their experiences and relatives of the dead were pleased to have recognition. Sophie Wessex (as she was then) was very effective as she talked to them. Giving her full attention with no signs of needing to move on. A lesson to me. The major thought I am left with when I reflect is how many volunteers underpin our life in Thatcham. As Mayor I was asked to AGMs so that it would be reported in the NWN so I learned about many organisations which I just had not thought about before. Basically I was touched by the high esteem the position of Mayor is still held by members of the public when their opinion of "politicians" is low. I enjoyed every minute of being with them and learning what they did. Perhaps the best example of them is Lady Benyon being in a fluster because she was not there to greet me when arrived at the Long Gallery for a concert. But then she had a higher opinion/experience of politicians than most!

Sheila Ellison, Mayor of Thatcham 2015-16



I was delighted to be elected as Mayor of Thatcham in 2016 and I served two years. I did not imagine that serving as Mayor could be so enjoyable and rewarding.

I met so many local residents, schools, clubs, organisations, hospitals, shops, businesses-the list goes on.

I also met with Mayors and dignitaries from all around Berkshire, attending Services parades and tea parties.

There were many highlights - from the child asking "do you live in a palace?" To leading the Freedom of the Town Parade with the Royal School of Military Survey to renew their rights to march through the town "colours flying, bands playing, drums beating and bayonets fixed"

But Perhaps the most enjoyable event was the F A Trophy Final held at Wembley. We had supported the Town F C and were delighted to watch their progress up to the final at Wembley. Myself, my husband and the Deputy Mayor were treated to a VIP day We sat in the Royal Box to watch the game, we enjoyed delicious food and drink, all topped off with Thatcham winning the Trophy.!!

Ellen Crumly, Thatcham Mayor 2016-2018



During my time as Thatcham Mayor 1979-80:

BROADWAY EXCAVATION

It was at this time that the original Broadway Co-op Shop was about to extend its premises. The former St Mary's School, which had also served as the first home of Thatcham Parish Council, had been purchased and demolished. Permission was

obtained from the Co-op for an excavation on that land. Subsequently, one weekend in October 1979, I and other local volunteers (including local historian Peter Allen), joined a group of Cambridge archaeologists, led by Mark Horton, to dig for any evidence of a Saxon Village in the Broadway. Sadly, only a couple of pieces of medieval pottery and a much later James Keller & Son cracked marmalade pot were found there.

VANCOUVER CITY COUNCIL

It so happened that in August 1979, I was visiting my sister and her family in Vancouver, Washington, USA. My brother-in-law happened to have contacts with the city councillors. Somewhat clandestinely, he arranged for me to attend an impending City Council meeting. This I did and I must have delayed the meeting by at least half-an-hour by projecting photo-slides of Thatcham to all assembled. I recall that the last slide showed a sunset over what then remained of "La Moore" of Thatcham.

COUNCIL CONSIDERS A NEW OFFICE

It was in October of 1979 when members decided that the council property in Chapel Street was in the 'wrong place'. They considered that an office within the Memorial Playing Fields complex would be more conveniently situated. It was suggested that a suitable piece of land might be that which lies between Robert Brown's field and the access road to the Health Centre. An approach was to be made to Berkshire County Council (owner of the land) to enquire about a sale or lease to the Town Council.

FIRST OFFICIAL CIVIC CHURCH SERVICE

Thatcham Town Council's first civic church service was held at the United Reformed Church, Church Lane, on 25th May 1980. Revd Arthur Baker led the service.

MEMORIAL PLAYING FIELD

Following two public meetings, the Town Council (as Trustee of the Memorial Playing Field) eventually acquired permission from the Thatcham residents present at the second meeting (October 1979) by 60-25 (with 4 abstentions) to sell charity land adjacent to Beverley Close. The second meeting was ordered by the Charity Commission owing to complaints from some residents, who claimed to have been under the impression at the first meeting, held towards the end of 1978, that proceeds from a sale would be used to purchase replacement land. Indeed, the Town Council had originally intended to purchase Brown's Field for that purpose but tax complications had inhibited that.

The second meeting had its contentious moments, when the local County Councillor, Harry Gray of Cold Ash) attempted to speak. As chairman of the meeting, I pointed out that only residents of Thatcham were allowed to speak and vote on the matter under discussion. The meeting volubly approved, whereupon Mr Gray walked out of the meeting. In the following month the 0.81 acre of charity land was sold at auction for £107,000.

PUBLIC MEETING REJECTED MASS DEVELOPMENT

On 9th January 1980, I chaired a public meeting that was called to consider proposals contained in the Newbury District Development Plan. The meeting was attended by about 400 residents, of which large majorities advocated (1) that no large-scale development should take place anywhere within Thatcham's boundaries, (2) in the event that such development be unavoidable, then the area of first choice would be to the north-east of Thatcham and (3) in that event, average density of new development should be no greater than seven dwellings per acre net of roads and open spaces. Members of the council supported all these views.

It transpired however, that the south-east of Thatcham was subsequently selected for large-scale development by the planning authority. Notwithstanding that, eight years later the north-east was also granted permission - for about 1,100 houses.

Roy Tubb, Thatcham Mayor 1979-80



I was honoured to have been selected as The Mayor of Thatcham on two occasions, the first in 2012-2013 and the second time in 2021-2022.

Both were very memorable for different reasons. The first was during the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, which also coincided with the London Olympics and everything that went ahead of that event, Such as the torch relay which passed through Thatcham and then The get Berkshire active awards ceremony at the conclusion of the games, an event which was also attended by Berkshire Olympians. Being invited to a garden party to celebrate The Queen's Diamond Jubilee was definitely a tick on the bucket list and was accompanied by my daughter Kellie Who was acting as the Mayoress.

My second term coincided with the country emerging from the Covid lockdown and all the restrictions that involved. People were very keen to get out to events which was marked by the best Thatcham Family Fun Day since its inception.

With each term in office I was amazed at the community groups whose events I attended. The diversity brought home to me what an incredible community spirit exists in Thatcham and they love people have for their town. When switching on the Christmas lights in 2021, I introduced three families who were Political refugees from Hong Kong and had decided to make Thatcham their home. This announcement was greeted with welcoming applause throughout the Broadway and proved to these families they had made the right decision to join our great community.

I do feel incredibly honoured to have held the post and as somebody who was raised in Thatcham and attended both Francis Bailey and Kennet Schools, this did give me an extra sense of pride.

John Boyd, Thatcham Mayor 2012 and 2021



PAST MAYORS OF THATCHAM



2023 to 2024 Mark Lillycrop	1997 to 1998 P. Gildersleeves OBE
2022 to 2023 Jeff Brooks	1996 to 1997 P. Gildersleeves OBE
2021 to 2022 John Boyd	1995 to 1996 G.E. Cruse
2020 to 2021 Mike Cole	1994 to 1995 A. Stevens
2019 to 2020 Mike Cole	1993 to 1994 A. Stevens
2018 to 2019 Jan Cover	1992 to 1993 R.B. Judge
2017 to 2018 Ellen Crumly	1991 to 1992 R.A. Higgins
2016 to 2017 Ellen Crumly	1990 to 1991 K.W. Woodhams
2015 to 2016 Sheila Ellison	1989 to 1990 K.G. Rye
2014 to 2015 Gary Johnson	1988 to 1989 D. Cornish
2013 to 2014 Mike Cole	1987 to 1988 M. Rees
2012 to 2013 John Boyd	1986 to 1987 G.R. Lawson
2011 to 2012 Lee Dillon	1985 to 1986 A.A. Aslett
2010 to 2011 Lee Dillon	1984 to 1985 M.F. Barrett
2009 to 2010 Stephanie Steevenson	1983 to 1984 F.M. Hutchings
2008 to 2009 Jenny Weaving	1982 to 1983 P.B. Gildersleeves
2007 to 2008 Phil Dray	1981 to 1982 D.A. Thair
2006 to 2007 Alexander Payton	1980 to 1981 M.F. Barrett
2005 to 2006 Phil Dray	1979 to 1980 R.B Tubb
2004 to 2005 Sheila Ellison	1978 to 1979 G. Pickersgill
2003 to 2004 June Judge	1977 to 1978 P.B. Gildersleeves
2002 to 2003 June Judge	1976 to 1977 D.E. Wootton
2001 to 2002 M.J. Gildersleeves	1975 to 1976 H.J. Williams
2000 to 2001 R.B Judge	1974 to 1975 P. Davies
1999 to 2000 R.B. Judge	
1998 to 1999 I.M. Street	