

The Royal Visit to the Punchestown Racecourse

The Kildare Observer

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“On the eve of the Royal Visit to Punchestown there was colour in Naas. The decorators were busy, the employees of the Urban Council were busy, and everywhere there was a bustle which no Punchestown event since 1829 equalled. The fags, bannerettes, festoons and arches were of such & nature as would delight the eye of the most aesthetic. As we described in our last week's issue, the progress of the King was under three arches. The first was at the entrance, and the second and most picturesque was at the entrance into South Main street. On the side facing the station and the first thing meeting the eyes of their Majesties was:

So Maíró Síó Slán

which, freely interpreted, means “Healthy be Your Lives.” On the obverse side appeared in English: "Accept a People's Welcome."

THE CONSTABULARY

The R.I.C. played the principal part in this auspicious event. From the slopes of the Galtees, the plains of Royal Meath, and the low-lying lands of Kings and Queen's, they flocked to Naas. Never was such force coming voluntarily to jail! Straw Lodge on Monday night re-echoed the sharp accent of the Northman, whose home was not far from Fair Head in Antrim, mingled with the softer accent of the man whose early years were spent in Killarney, Kenmare, or, perhaps, in that storm-beaten spit of land which terminates in the old Head of Kinsale. Stalwart men all. The scene in Naas on Monday evening could not be excelled. Motors flying past, a troop of cavalry of the R.I.C. next, then the measured tramp of the armed men of the R.I.C. Anon the hurried entrance to the cells to take off haversacks and other accoutrements and look for some place to "get a bit to eat."

TUESDAY

The morning was cloudy, but the weather prophets were for once correct when they said the day would be fine. King's weather indeed it turned out to be. The complete decorations were seen to the very best advantage. From Poplar Square to the Green the subdued sunlight made the flags and bannerettes more of a picture of colour than . garish glow. The stir about the town commenced early, when the flying jehus seeking for passengers thronged Naas and the roads in the neighbourhood. Never was such a day in Naas! There was no military display-nothing but the dark blue uniform of the RIO blurred the decorations, and the gay costumes of the ladies and gentlemen who thronged to Naas to give their Sovereign and his Queen a hearty Irish welcome. Every householder had lent his aid to the general scheme of decoration. The public buildings were done up in a lavish style. At the order of the High Sheriff, Mr Pilkington, the splendid corinthian front of the courthouse was a truly floral picture. The canvas emblems of loyalty were rendered even more picturesque by the garlands of roses and other flowers which wreathed the pillars. The constabulary barracks were decorated in a lavish fashion. Two masts flying flags guarded the entrance. Flags were flying everywhere in the yard, and almost every nation was represented on canvas. The post office was decorated very prettily, and so were the banks. From the ancient Church of St David floated a Royal Standard, and to crown the entire effect the old Moat of Naas had been also very pleasingly and artistically decorated by Mr Whiteside Dane, DL. The committee having charge of the decorations included the members of the Naas Urban Council, Mr E Glover, Co Surveyor; Messrs R Hall, Town Surveyor; S J Brown, Chairman Co Kildare Co Council, and J Whiteside Dane, DL, Clerk of the Crown and Peace, and the result of their labours for the decoration of the town and the approaches to it reflects the highest credit on all concerned. For some hours previous to the arrival of their Majesties the town presented a spectacle of great bustle and animation. No less than eleven excursion trains crowded with passengers arrived in Naas on

Tuesday morning between the hours of 8 and 11 o'clock. Visitors from the rural districts were numerous, and many stopped to admire the real flowers from Lord Mayo's garden which decorated the pedestals of the arches. These floral tributes included cinerias, primulas and cornelias. The best exhibition of flowers was that which decorated the splendid arches at the junction of North and South Main streets. Here the snake emblematic of wisdom, emblazoned the butts of the supporting masts, with the motto, " Prudens ut Serpeus," which freely translated reads, "The Wisdom of the Serpent." Archdeacon Torrens had his residence handsomely decorated with flags, Royal monograms and shields, whilst in addition to the public decorations every private house sported its bannerettes, Union Jacks, and Standards. Some children waved miniature Union Jacks here and there, and loyalty and goodwill were manifest on every side. The Constabulary Band played selections opposite the Courthouse while awaiting the arrival of the august visitors, and with trains and vehicles bringing their thousands of spectators from all parts of the country, the streets of Naas were picturesque and animated.

ARRIVAL OF THE ROYAL TRAIN.

The Royal train arrived punctually at 12.30. The RIC band, drawn up outside, struck up the National Anthem, and his Majesty stepped out briskly, followed by the Queen bowing and smiling with that grace which has rendered her so lovable. There were on the platform to welcome their Majesties the following amongst many others:- The Duke and Duchess of Abercorn, the Marquis and Marchioness of Londonderry, the Marquis and Marchioness of Waterford, the Earl of Enniskillen. Sir John Olphert, Sir Arthur Vicars, Mr Herbert Fetherstonhangh. A number of railway directors and officials were also in attendance, including the chairman, Mr WJ Goulding DL, who was presented. A guard of honour of the Royal Irish Constabulary with the band was mounted at the station, under the command of District Inspector Mulliner. Mr William Staples, Chairman of the Naas Urban Council, Mr S J Brown, Chairman of Kildare County Council, and Mr Michael Gogarty, Town Clerk, came forward to present an address on behalf of the Urban Council. Mr Brown read the address, which was as follows:

May it Please Your Majesties,

WE, the Urban District Council of Naas, take this, the first opportunity of your Majesties' visit to our town and district, to approach your august persons, and on behalf of its inhabitants to offer our humble homage, and to welcome your gracious Majesties to the ancient corporate town of Naas, at one time the residence of the Kings of Leinster, and in which so far back as 1419 a Parliament was held.

For centuries our town was an important centre. Various circumstances of time, as well as its proximity to the Metropolitan City, have detracted from its importance and prosperity. But we have every hope that with the establishment of Local Industries and the spread of Technical Education under the benign reign of your Majesties, there is a brighter future in store for it, and the rest of Ireland.

We earnestly hope that your present visit to the premier County of Ireland and its historic and world-famed Punchestown, may be fraught with such pleasure to you both that your Majesties may be induced to return again and again, and to afford to your loyal subjects in Naas and Kildare many further opportunities of seeing and welcoming you in their midst.

Mrs & J Brown presented handsome bouquet of roses, lilies of the valley, and maidenhair fern to her Majesty who graciously received it and bowed her acknowledgments. His Majesty handed the copy of the address to Mr Brown. Entering their carriage, the Royal visitors drove away to Punchestown amidst ringing cheers, which were re-echoed by the crowds of spectators along the streets and from the windows of the houses along the route. The King repeatedly acknowledged the applause of the people, while the Queen bowed and smiled. Their Majesties apparently admired the decorations greatly as they passed through the town with their mounted escort of RIC under the command of Major R E Odlum, and went on towards the racecourse. The spectators also

cleared away, and shortly after few were to be seen in the town save the police on duty and those whose business would not permit them to join in the day's enjoyment at Punchestown.

ON THE ROAD.

When the cavalry escort had taken up their position the Royal and Viceregal carriage drove at an average pace through the crowded streets of Naas and along the road. The policing was splendid. Mr Crane, County Inspector, assisted by Mr Alexander Gray, DI, Naas had managed the huge number of men on duty with marvellous precision and activity. Nothing in the whole arrangements for the reception of their Majesties equalled the controlling of the traffic and the patrolling of the different routes to "kingly " Punchestown. From the railway station to the course the big men were stationed not many yards apart. The enormous number of cars from the metropolis-the huge number of private vehicles, from the four-in-hand of the aristocrat to the modest governess car were sent on their way without a single mishap. The foot passengers were looked after with fatherly solicitude, and no accident occurred to peasant, artisan, professional manipulator of the multifarious instruments of torture, who are always met with on the highways to Punchestown. Occasionally, it is true, a tramp overcome with excitement and other things had to be gently, but firmly, taken into custody, but nothing approaching disorder was discernible. The others who thus rendered such signal service were under the command of County Inspector H W Crane, and their names are - District Inspectors O'Hara, Power, Mulliner, Gray, Sharpe, Studdert, Yeldham, Taylour, Smyth, Bird."