

The Royals in Galway, 1903

On the 30th of August, 1903, The Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward VII came to Galway. He was accompanied by his wife who would later be Queen Alexandra. They had sailed into Killery Harbour aboard the royal yacht, and toured part of Conamara before boarding the Clifden train at Ballinahinch which brought them into Galway. Their visit to the city was full of pomp and ceremony.

Galwegians had turned their city into a blaze of colour and decoration with Venetian poles all along the route supporting flags and banners and streamers. The decoration committee were assiduous in their duties, and Messrs Binns and Tighe and Murphy (who was the secretary) worked like Trojans to make the town look its best. Galway was full of visitors, with thousands of people coming in from the surrounding countryside to join the locals. All business in the shops was suspended at one o'clock. After three no traffic was allowed in the streets, and by four, every spectator was in position because after that, there was much difficulty in getting about.

Edward and Alexandra were driven by carriage through the Square, down Shop Street, across O'Brien's Bridge, down Dominick Street towards the Jesuit Church and then past the Claddagh to the docks via the Wolfe Tone Bridge. At the docks, they boarded the Royal yacht. They received a warm and hearty welcome while they were here. The Queen was presented with a Galway cloak made by Alexander Moon, and the King was given a Claddagh ring made by Dillons.

Special viewing stands were erected. The public one at Eyre Square, which contained more than 500 people, commanded a splendid view. So also did the Railway Company's stand at the station, the one in front of the Bridge Mills, and Messrs Perrse's stand at the docks. All along the route, windows with a view sold at prices varying from one to five pounds.

Large banners were hung across the streets with messages like "He loves the Green Isle and his Love is recorded". Our photograph today shows one such banner hung between Dillon's Jewellers and Moons with the message "Welcome to the Citie of the Tribes". It might have been taken after the parade had finished. Indeed, the horse-drawn carriage we see on the left may have been the one which transported the Royals.

John Michael Aylward Lewis was the High Sheriff of Galway at the time, the Sovereign's judicial representative in the County, who also had ceremonial and administrative functions and executed High Court writs. The last High Sheriff of the Town was Thomas William Moffett in 1899.

The Minute Book of Galway Urban District Council for the 12th of May, 1910 reported a proposal on the occasion of the death of Edward VII, "that the meeting stand adjourned as a mark of respect to the memory of the King whose wise and prudent rule endeared himself to all his Irish subjects".

TK

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