

Knoyle Feast 1866 - 1926



From time immemorial the first Monday after the 19th of September has been kept as a general holiday in this village and is popularly termed "Knoyle Feast". It is customary for the foxhounds to draw the Knoyle coverts on that day, for the purpose of contributing to the amusement of the masses that on the hill tops do congregate.

Western Gazette Friday 05 October 1866

Letter to the Editor

Sir, Will you allow me a small space in your paper? I am unused to letter-writing, but in justice to myself I cannot allow the report given in your paper of my being fined at the Hindon Petty Sessions for being as therein stated, drunk at Knoyle Feast, to pass without some explanation. In the first place, I was not drunk. I went to Knoyle on business, and, it being cub hunting, after I transacted such business, I went and joined scores of others in witnessing the sport.

That over, I went to the nearest place for refreshment, the Fox and Hounds Inn, where I had three glasses of beer. I had no words with anyone, although there was plenty of quarrelling going on, and I saw several strip to fight - Knoyle men as well as those from other places. I left then and walked home, a distance of six miles.

To my surprise, a few days after, I was waited upon by a policeman, who served me with a summons, and on my asking him what it was for, he stated he did not know, he was not there. Imagine my further surprise when, on my appearing at Hindon, this man was the first to get into the witness box and swear I was drunk, which I repeat, was false. How was it that, with the exception of one other man, I should be picked out when there were upwards of a score drunk and quarrelling.

Yours very respectfully,

Solomon Maidment, Gillingham, Oct 14, 1872

Western Gazette Friday 18 October 1872

Knoyle Feast was celebrated last week, and the old custom of the South and West Wilts Hounds meeting at the Windmill was observed. The pack looked in the pink of condition, and Lord Heytesbury, the popular master, was present, in addition to a large number on horseback, and many inhabitants of Knoyle, which make the day an annual fox-hunting day. After some good sport, two foxes were killed. After the hunt, the Green, near the Fox and Hounds, was visited and here roundabouts, swinging boats and other amusements were provided. East Knoyle brass band was in attendance, under bandmaster Francis, and they played selections of music. Dancing wound up a very pleasant day

Western Gazette 04 October 1901

Knoyle Feast was held on Monday, and, as usual, a meet of the South and West Wilts Foxhounds took place on Windmill Hill the same day. The Master, Lord Stalbridge, was present, and the hounds were much admired. A large number, both on horseback and foot, attended the meet. After several coverts had been drawn without result, a find was made in Park Copse but Reynard got away. Hunting over, the spectators usually make a move to the Green, where amusements are generally provided, but during the war they were dispensed with, and this year much disappointment was felt as there was only a stall or two and an Aunt Sally. The proceedings, however, were enlivened by the attendance of the village brass band, which played for dancing. Probably another year will see a revival of "all the fun of the fair".

Western Gazette Friday 26 September 1919

The old custom of holding what is known locally as Knoyle Feast was observed on Monday. The South and West Wilts Foxhounds met for cub hunting on the Windmill Hill, the usual custom. Foxes were plentiful but the scent being bad, sport was not so good as on some previous meetings.

In the evening the Mere Brass Band, under Bandmaster F Sheppard, played for dancing at the Green from 6 till 8, and from 8.30 in the village hall. Until a few years ago, Knoyle Feast Day was observed in the village as a general holiday and all the fun of a country fair could be found on the Windmill Hill. Some of the inhabitants still regard it as a day for general holiday, but, like many more old village customs, it appears to be gradually dying out.

Western Gazette Friday 01 October 1926