

WITH THE V I P s

THE HON. ALGERNON FRANCIS STANLEY, born 1874, was the 7th son of Sir Frederick Arthur Stanley 16th Earl of Derby (1841-1908), and served in the South African War in 1899-1900.

By 1913 Captain the Hon. Algernon Francis Stanley, had set up home on the Derby estate at the Black Moss Mansion, Thornley. His eldest brother was by then the 17th Earl of Derby.

On Thursday 11th December 1913 Queen Alexandra, widow of Edward VII, came to luncheon at Black Moss. She was spending the week with the Earl and Countess of Derby at Knowsley and motored over to Black Moss via Preston during the morning. From Thornley she proceeded to Hoghton Tower to pay a short informal visit, taking tea with Sir James and Lady de Hoghton, before returning to Knowsley.

The Royal party travelled in four cars, in the first of which was Queen Alexandra, the Countess of Derby, and the Marquis de Seval. In the second was Princess Victoria, Lady Moyra Cavendish, and Captain Algernon Stanley; in the third the Countess of Leicester, Miss Ivy Gordon-Lennox (lady-in-waiting on the Queen); and in the fourth the Countess of Gosford and Count Mensdorff.

The Queen, formerly a Danish princess, was very popular with the public. She was an energetic supporter of charities. The previous June her Alexandra Rose Day had been established to raise money for British hospitals. Thousands of cheering people lined the route, especially in Preston.

At the entrance to the Black Moss drive local people were gathered behind barriers. It was a bleak windy winter's day with drizzling rain. The onlookers, many having walked there, braved the elements for about three hours. All who could be spared from the farms and cottages in the area attended, and also the scholars from Thornley and Chipping schools for whom a holiday had been declared.

The Royal party arrived at Black Moss at 1.35 and after luncheon, an hour later, "the cars returned along the drive and pulled up immediately before passing out of the avenue on to the Longridge to Whitewell road. At this point a triangular enclosure had been formed behind the massive pillars of rustic masonry surmounted with moulded caps and huge spherical stones which have just been erected, forming a new entrance to the drive."

"Two chestnut trees each 14ft high, had been set on each side of the entrance, and as a memento of her visit Queen Alexandra had consented to perform the formal ceremony of planting the tree on the West side."

"The first car drew up opposite a small platform extending from the roadway to the tree, in the final setting of which Queen Alexandra was to play a part. Captain Stanley was the first to alight, and then her Majesty, who was dressed entirely in black, stepped on to the platform to receive a rousing welcome from the country folk. Captain Stanley received from Mr James Eccles, the estate bailiff, a lady's steel garden spade which he in turn handed to her Majesty who deposited three spadefuls of fine earth at the root of the young chestnut. The spade was returned to the estate bailiff as a souvenir."

"Returning to the car Queen Alexandra repeatedly bowed in acknowledgment of the enthusiastic greeting of the crowd, and after shaking hands with Captain Stanley continued her journey to Hoghton Tower."

The bellringers of Chipping Parish Church marked the occasion of Queen Alexandra's visit to Black Moss. "They assembled at one o'clock, and after "firing" the bells for some time, a 720 of bob minor was rung, containing 18 bobs and 2 singles. The ringers were:-

1.R.Kenyon 2.F.Timbrell 3.J.T.Kenyon 4.John Seed
5.E.Timbrell, conductor. 6.W.T.H.Timbrell

The flag was flying over the tower of the old church all day."

Sadly, the "Royal" chestnut tree died and was replaced.