

# THE STORY OF THE SOCIETY'S NEW POST CARD

**Brian J. Birch**

Some eighteen months ago, I was visiting Rosemary Smith and she showed me the Society's original photograph of Queen Victoria's Jubilee procession with Joseph Sloper's premises in the background. Apparently, this was one of the trophies given to the Society when Joseph Sloper's Works finally closed about ten years ago. It is a large sepia photograph and had once shown impressive detail but is now extremely faded, having hung on a wall in Sloper's offices for the best part of a century.

The photograph was not only a memento of Sloper's company but also showed a unique moment in the history of this country and so, I offered to take it to a photographer who specialised in restoring old photographs and get an improved copy. Having seen some restored family photographs, I had been duly impressed with the possibilities of restoration and was sure that this photograph would respond to treatment in a similar fashion.

To cut a long story short, the photographer's answer was that he could not do anything with the photograph - it was too big for him to handle. According to him, he had tried a number of specialists but none were willing to even try. In their view, each person in the photograph would need to be improved individually and, self evidently, that was economically impossible.

As it happened, I had just begun a project with my Company's advertising agency, Interactive Dimension (ID) who scan and manipulate digital images every working day of their lives. When I approached them with the Society's picture their immediate response was that it was no problem. Thus, some weeks later I received the photograph back together with a digitally-produced and significantly enhanced copy. Without giving the matter any significant thought, this leisure activity was now being conducted during my working hours.

After some discussions, it was agreed that they would produce some post-card size copies which ID chose to create in the original sepia, with a traditional postcard reverse. As the time for printing approached, they e-mailed me to enquire about a caption for the reverse. I immediately, and thoughtlessly, replied *Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee 1897: Joseph Slopers Offices*. How horrendous. I had given the issue no thought during a busy day at work, just dashing off the reply. A moments reflection and I would have seen the incompatibility immediately. I knew very well that Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and that her Golden Jubilee was 1887 and her Diamond Jubilee 1897. I was also aware that Slopers should have carried an apostrophe between the r and the s, but in the grand scheme of error creation, that was trifling.

## Was it the Golden or Diamond Jubilee?

The real question was whether the parade was for Victoria's Golden or Diamond Jubilee. A quick look at the CD version of Encyclopaedia Britannica determined that there was a parade held for both Jubilees, but no description of either. An obvious source of information was the Internet but my quick trawl only confirmed that there were no pictures of either of the parades. However, I did locate a site: [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org) which seemed to be maintained by an enthusiast. An e-mail to the site owner brought the following response:

*In 1887, Great Britain celebrated Queen Victoria's 50th anniversary on the throne. During her reign the United Kingdom had become the greatest imperial and industrial power in the world and her family was related to nearly every royal house in Europe. On the Jubilee Day, June 21, 1887, the Queen drove to Westminster Abbey in an open carriage drawn by six cream horses, accompanied by the Crown Princess of Germany and by the Princess of Wales, and with an escort of Indian cavalry. In another carriage drove the Duchess of Edinburgh and Princesses Helena, Louise and Beatrice; then came the processions of princes riding on horses, the Queen's three sons (the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Coburg and the Duke of Connaught), her five sons-in-law (the Crown Prince of Germany, the Grand Duke of Hesse, Prince Christian, Lord Lorne and Prince Henry of Battenberg) and eight of her grandsons (the future Kaiser Wilhelm II, Prince Henna of Prussia, Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales, Prince Ernst Ludwig of Hesse, Prince Alfred of Edinburgh, and Princes Christian Victor and Albert of Schleswig Holstein). Fritz, the Crown Prince of Germany outshone the other princes with his golden beard and the German eagle on his helmet; despite he was without voice because of a throat cancer, he had insisted in attending the Jubilee.*

The description above indicates that our postcard shows the rear of a carriage and three or four princes and other royals on horses, lead by her son, the future King Edward VII. There is no indication of a further thirteen princes as described above, in the picture. Indeed, the only other person that is readily recognisable by me is Franz Josef, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, who was not listed in the Golden Jubilee parade.

It is therefore evident that the description of the Golden Jubilee parade does not correspond with what we can see on the postcard. I believe that we can now confirm that the card shows Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee parade of 1897.

My apologies for the mistake.

Brian Birch  
3<sup>rd</sup> April 2004.