

## ROBERT KEAYNE (1595-1656)

OF WINDSOR AND MASSACHUSETTS U.S.A.

The weather-beaten bronze plaque in River Street, Windsor commemorates Robert Keayne, son of John Keayne, a butcher, who was born in the house that stood on the site from Tudor times until it was demolished in 1903 and rebuilt as it now exists. It is visited by American tourists, especially those from Boston, Mass. where he founded the Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts in 1638. According to the *Windsor, Eton and Slough Express* reports of July 1912, the plaque was made in Newburyport, Mass. for the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts who brought it to Windsor with a contingent of some 50 officers and men to be inaugurated on Friday, 12th July. The plaque was unveiled by the American Ambassador, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, attended by the detachment of the American H.A.C. and the London Honorable Artillery Company – who were celebrating their 375th anniversary, having been founded in 1537.

The Corporation was led by the Mayor, Alderman Augustus Harris, who was a butcher and whose premises were on the same site as that of Robert Keayne's father, 28 Thames Street, to which the plaque was attached.

On arrival, by special train, at the Central station, both Companies were welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor (Sir Frederick Dyson) and Lady Dyson. Led by the H.A.C. band, they marched to the Guildhall where the visitors were presented with an oak casket made from a beam saved from the building demolished in 1903. The band played the National Anthem and 'Yankee Doodle'.

'The blue trousers and red tunics of the American Company and the uniforms and bearskin caps of the London artillery and infantry detachment together with the band and colour parties made a splendid picture.' records the *Windsor, Eton and Slough Express*. Toasts were drunk to the Sovereign, King George V and to the President of the United States of America, and accorded full artillery 'fire' which consisted of some half dozen cries of "Zat!". In the American rank and file were three interesting figures – a veteran from the American Civil War (1861-1865), Sergt. W.B. Lucas with 52 years service in the Corps, Major Maynard, another Civil War veteran, and a little scout who was the grandson of Captain Appleton who commanded the American Company, which was in the charge of Colonel Sydney Hedges.

Colonel Hedges, addressing the assembly at River Street recalled that the history of the Ancient and Honorable Company practically started at the very spot where Robert Keayne was born. He went on to relate the story of Robert Keayne's life and involvement with the H.A.C. and invited the American Ambassador to unveil the plaque which was covered with the colours of the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes. The Ambassador then read the inscription for the benefit of those at a distance. After lunch at the White Hart Hotel the company went to London for further celebrations.



*In April 1977 the plaque was removed from its position at the corner of River Street to a new site a few yards further down the road. Members of Windsor Local History Publications Group attended the ceremony arranged by Baskin Robbins, the ice cream firm that had just taken over the building. Photograph by Terry Austin-Smith of Watford.*

In 1903, Councillor J. P. Hollis saved a beam from the original Tudor house which was eventually used to make two caskets which were carved in co-operation with Alderman A.T. Barber and Mr. A. Y. Nutt the artist and designer who worked in Windsor Castle. The carving was done by Mr. C. Deacon and the caskets were made in Messrs Hollis and Sons workshops by Mr. A. Beal. The Arms of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company appear on the lid flanked on either side by the Arms