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THE NEWS WELCOMES 1948

Christmas was almost forgotten. World events in the closing days of the old year made the setting for the arrival of 1948. And it was a seasonal reminder that the English love of the country is as great as ever which took the cameras to Stratford-on-Avon. Here the West Warwickshire Farmers Hunt moves off on its annual meet.

It is at the beginning of a year (in the second month of its season) that fox hunting reaches its peak. Nearly all of Britain's 180 registered packs meet at this time. In Warwickshire, there was a field of nearly 100 followers and the meet was watched by many holidaymakers.

Favoured by sunny weather, the meet went off successfully even though the hounds did not make a kill. For the Hunt a tradition in British sport had been observed.

Year's end brought national rejoicing to Sweden. It was the 40th anniversary of King Gustav's coronation.

Great crowds gathered in front of the Royal Palace when the King drove off to a celebration service in Stockholm's Cathedral. School children, and old people born in the same year as the King were included in the Royal party.

89 years old, King Gustav was reported to be too weak to attend the evening jubilee celebrations. Only recently, the elderly monarch had taken part in a Swedish tennis tournament. In his 40 year rule, he has become a well-loved figure throughout his country.

All told, it was a royal week - with royalty in the news for a variety of reasons. Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy for nearly 50 years, died in exile, 78 years old. Only five feet two, death came to him in Alexandria, the city he once hoped to enter at the head of his conquering troops. A quaint little man, it was Victor Emmanuel who accepted Mussolini's rise to power.

Victor Emmanuel died a forgotten man. His former Kingdom (like six other European states) had become a republic. On a continent where, a few years ago, eleven sovereigns reigned in all their glory, only five were left. For yet another - Michael of Rumania - had abdicated. 26 years old, he had had little say in the affairs of his Communist dominated country. Rumour linked his name with Princess Anne of Bourbon-Parma (extreme right). In great secrecy, Michael and Anne spent a week in Lausanne with the Queen-Mother Helen. But reported interference from Foreign Minister Anna Pauker had forced Michael's hand. Like his father before him he renounced his throne as a result of political pressure.