

who mustered in the Cow Fair. There they were addressed by Col. Norris, who hailed what he termed a 'most glorious relief,' calling for three cheers for Mafeking, for the gallant defenders, and the relieving force. Having responded to the gallant colonel's request, the men were marched off to Wroxton for a day scheduled for drill.<sup>3</sup>

Having expected better news from Africa for some time, the authorities had already laid plans for a public celebration, a torchlight parade and a bonfire having been decided on as the principal feature of the rejoicing. Again it was decided the Cow Fair would be the venue for the fire, and during the day a great crowd followed the progress of what it was hoped would eclipse earlier fires. The day being observed as a general holiday townsfolk were joined by others from neighbouring villages, anxious to join in the festivities. Music provided by the Volunteer force was much appreciated, while early in the evening the choir of St John's Roman Catholic church – the tower of which was festooned with decorations – positioned themselves on the roof of that prominent building, sang a number of musical items, concluding with their rendition of the National Anthem.<sup>4</sup>

Attention now focused on the Cow Fair, thronged by a large crowd. Spectators observed how several tons of combustible material supplemented by a great quantity of furze, held out the prospect of a conflagration that would outdo earlier events. Nine o'clock had been set for the ceremonial lighting of the fire, preceded by a procession starting from the Corporation Yard. A group of torchbearers led the way, followed by the Volunteer Band, the Grimsbury Mission Band, and the Salvation Army Band, all playing patriotic airs. Two manual fire engines, lavishly decorated with flags and lanterns, came next. At the back of one engine was a depiction of Kruger being pursued by Joseph Chamberlain, while at the rear of the second engine was a lighted transparency bearing the word 'Mafeking.' Public appreciation of the of the parade, and the thousands of people thronging the processional route was such as to delay the lighting of the fire until half past nine. Having called for three cheers for the Queen, for Baden Powell, and the gallant defenders of Mafeking, the mayor (Councillor H. Bartlett) stepped forward and ignited the bonfire. It went up, the local journal stated, with 'a great blaze.' The fire proved to be so great and the heat intense that

---

<sup>3</sup> *Banbury Advertiser*, 24 May 1900.

<sup>4</sup> *Banbury Advertiser*.