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VICTORY IN EUROPE & JAPAN

VE 80 VJ

80th ANNIVERSARY OFFICIAL COMMEMORATIVE JOURNAL

VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

HORIZON Publications Limited

COMBAT STRESS
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

The Association of Royal Navy Officers (ARNO)

Over 100 Years at the Helm of the Naval Officer Family

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Founded in 1920, **ARNO** today is a 5000 strong dynamic membership association which provides a vital network for the serving and retired **RN, RM, WRNS, QARNNS** and **RFA** officers, as well as officers from the **SCC, VCC, CCF,** and **URNUs.**

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Please do get in touch.

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For more information about the charity, visit : **www.rnoc.org.uk**

Here, you can read our latest Impact Report and donate online. Registered Charity No: 207405

VE80VJ

IN TRIBUTE & REMEMBRANCE

Dedicated to all those who secured peace

"If ye break faith with us who die We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields".

John McCrae

His wish for the sacrifice of so many to be remembered by their compatriots is completely understandable and strikes a chord with anyone who has lost someone in war. The worst fate of all is to be forgotten.

Almost One Hundred years later. Colonel McCrae would be moved to witness how strongly remembrance burns in a grateful nations collective conscience. The cemeteries are lovingly attended and visited in enormous numbers by the descendants of those that fell and by thousands of their countrymen who merely wish to pay their respects.

The shock waves of past conflicts still shimmer on the edge of our folk memory, the sacrifices have not been forgotten. Britain's casualty figures affect the country still.

Their Name Liveth Forever More.

Soldier poet Richard Aldington wrote:

"You are the future of a far-flung past. You are the generation for whom we wept and died."

The covenant has been kept. WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

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VE80VJ

VICTORY IN EUROPE & JAPAN

80th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE JOURNAL

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BUCKINGHAM PALACE

MESSAGE FROM
HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III

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We remember and give thanks for the extraordinary bravery, resourcefulness and tenacity demonstrated by those who fought in the European and Asia-Pacific Theatre of the Second World War. Together, they comprised a force whose courage was as remarkable as its diversity - hundreds of thousands of troops from India, Burma, China and across Asia, were joined by hundreds of thousands more from Europe, Africa, Australasia and North America. Together, they served with the greatest distinction. Without them, the war could not have been won.

The surrender of Imperial Japan and the cessation of fighting in the Asia-Pacific Region, brought an end to six bitter years of global conflict. Victory in Europe had been achieved that May, of course. The Normandy Landings were pivotal in ending the main European Campaign. Whilst millions in Europe rejoiced, in South-East Asia and the Pacific our long-suffering service personnel, with their Commonwealth and Allied partners, continued the fight for three more months. It was their extraordinary endurance and fortitude which secured the end of the War.

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, it is hard for us to appreciate fully the suffering endured by those who fought, or were caught up in, this theatre of war. Drawing on his time as Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia Command my great uncle, Lord Mountbatten, helped me begin to understand the quite atrocious conditions experienced by our forces throughout South-East Asia. But those of us not there at the time really can only begin to understand...

We should also reflect on those unfortunate prisoners of war, who suffered so dreadfully. Over a quarter of all Allied Prisoners of War lost their lives in captivity.

The courage and fortitude shown by all those who fought in the region was exemplary. Field Marshal Slim observed that victory was reliant "...upon their courage, their hardihood, their refusal to be beaten either by the cruel hazards of nature or by the fierce strength of their human adversary". No fewer than twenty-nine Victoria Crosses were awarded during the Burma Campaign - the highest tally of any theatre of war; another measure of its exceptional nature. It is also of the greatest importance to remember the courage of the many ethnic groups in Burma who fought so bravely in the most appalling circumstances. Their resolve, like that of all British, Commonwealth and Allied Forces, was unbreakable and, to this day, stands as an example to us all.

Eighty years after that hard-won victory over tyranny in Europe and Asia, I am proud and humbled to express my profound respect and admiration to the Veterans and survivors of those interminable and terrible campaigns. Above all, however, let us remember all those who never returned, and would never grow old. We pray that their stories will be passed on to the generations of today and tomorrow so that we can learn from their example.

In the spirit of remembrance we affirm that they and the surviving veterans are not forgotten. Rather, you are respected, thanked and cherished with all our hearts, and for all time. We salute all those who remain among us and offer our most heartfelt and undying gratitude for those who are gone before. Your service and your sacrifice will echo through the ages.

CHARLES R.
2025

Become a VSC Member Today

VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

London's only tri-Service, all ranks Military Club

proudly supports the

80th Anniversary of VE/VJ Day

Located in London's Marble Arch, VSC welcomes membership from serving and veteran members of the British, Commonwealth and NATO armed forces, including reserves, as well as their parents and children over 18 years.

With competitive rates, modern accommodation, 'The Grill' restaurant, coffee and lounge bars, and our signature Victory Ale, it's a space of comfort and camaraderie. Find your 'home away from home' at the VSC.

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For Membership Information

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Registered Charity Number: 261307 (England)

“The war is over...

You know, I think, that those four words have for the Queen and myself the same significance, simple yet immense, that they have for you. Our hearts are full to overflowing, as are your own. Yet there is not one of us who has experienced this terrible war who does not realise that we shall feel it’s inevitable consequences long after we have all forgotten our rejoicings of today.

But that relief from past dangers must not blind us to the demands of the future. The British people here at home have added lustre to the true fame of our Islands, and we stand today with our whole Empire in the forefront of the victorious United Nations. Great, therefore, is our responsibility to make sure by the actions of every man and every woman here and throughout the Empire and Commonwealth that the peace gained amid measureless trials and suffering shall not be cast away.”

King George VI 15th August 1945

VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

Many serving armed forces and veterans know of the Victory Services Club (VSC), a London military members only club for those who serve or have served in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army, and Royal Air Force, along with their families. Founded in 1907 to support those returning from the Boer War, the VSC is open to all ranks across the three Services.

Just 200m from Marble Arch, the VSC is easily accessible via major railway stations and well-served by public transport. It also offers a pre-booking discount at Q-Park Marble Arch and Park Lane.

Membership is **free** for UK Armed Forces personnel and those from NATO and the Commonwealth, with a modest annual fee for Veterans. Family membership is also available to parents and children 18+ years of serving and former serving armed forces.

Join the VSC

Joining is easy. Apply online at **www.vsc.co.uk/membership/how-to-join** or contact our membership team at **0207 616 8312** or **mem@vsc.co.uk**

THE VSC - WHERE YOU BELONG

The VSC is dedicated to its core commitments of Value, Service, and Courtesy, reflected in every aspect of its operations.

The club is an ideal venue for meeting friends, hosting reunions, or using as a London base for work or leisure. Its extensively refurbished dining facilities, led by award-winning chefs, offer specially crafted menus.

Following years of investment, it now has over 200 bedrooms, 150 air-conditioned, including nine accessible rooms with entrance ramps. Double, twin, single and family rooms are available, all at competitive rates for a Central London location. For the latest room rates, please visit the VSC website at **www.vsc.co.uk**.

Meeting and event spaces accommodate from 8 to 300 people, with dining for up to 180 guests. The club's event spaces are increasingly popular, with businesses supporting the Armed Forces community.

As a charity, the VSC provides Respite and Welfare Breaks to those recommended by military charities or Single Service Recovery staff.

Last year, over 200 families benefited from free weekend stays focused on rest and wellbeing. Each stay includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Beneficiaries also receive tickets to top London attractions, offering relaxation and distraction from personal challenges.

VSC reinvests all its profits into infrastructure and charitable initiatives, ensuring continued support for the Armed Forces community.

Becoming a member or donating to the VSC is a meaningful way to contribute. Visit us—you won't be disappointed!

COMBAT STRESS
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

MESSAGE FROM

General Sir Peter Wall GCB CBE DL

President, Combat Stress

As we mark VE and VJ Day, we pause to remember an extraordinary generation - those who stood firm in the face of unimaginable hardship, and whose courage helped secure the peace we enjoy today.

At Combat Stress, the UK's leading military veterans' mental health charity, we honour not just their service, but the sacrifices made long after the guns fell silent. For many veterans, the battles did not end with victory — and our role, then as now, is to ensure they are never left to face those struggles alone.

This day reminds us of the resilience of the human spirit, and of our shared responsibility to support those who have served. We are proud to walk alongside veterans of all generations, providing expert mental health care that helps them rebuild, recover, and live meaningful lives.

To all who served - and to all who continue to support them — we extend our deepest gratitude. May the memory of VE and VJ Day inspire us to keep striving for a world where no veteran is forgotten, and where hope always has a place.

2025

ACTIONS OF THE PAST STILL IMPACT VETERANS TODAY

Leaving a legacy will help the veterans of tomorrow.

We have over 100 years experience caring for veterans from every service and our role today is to help those with some of the most complex mental health challenges. Please support our work.

SCAN HERE

As a charity, gifts in Wills fund one in five of the veterans we treat.

To find out more, including our free Will offer, contact Sarah on **01372 587 144** or email **sarah.seddon@combatstress.org.uk**
Visit **combatstress.org.uk/leavealegacy**

Here to help 24/7, free Helpline: 0800 138 1619

COMBAT STRESS

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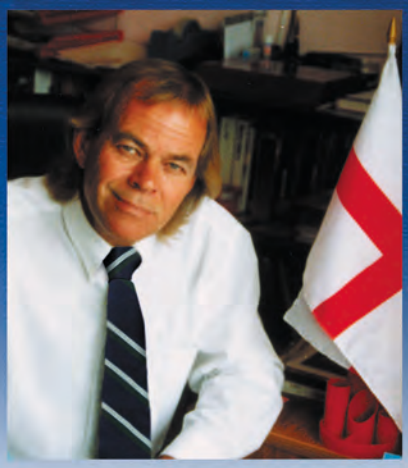
Welcome from the Editor

Tony Talbott



Even as we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of VE and VJ Day, when Britain and her allies finally vanquished the horrors of Nazism and the Imperial Japanese Empire, fresh conflicts gives us cause to reflect on the fragility of peace. The growing escalation of hostilities around the world are deeply troubling.

These are an illustration of the febrile times we are living in. With bloody wars raging in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen, Sudan and elsewhere, the world has seldom been more dangerous.

We give thanks to the generation who fought and died for our freedom between 1939 and 1945. It was an inspiring, almost superhuman achievement.

Sadly, that hard fought victory did not lead to the 'sunlit uplands' of world peace Churchill had hoped for. The truth is liberty must be defended and fought for by every generation. The current one is no exception.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to and made this publication possible. Thank you for your time, generosity and support.

The Editor, Tony Talbott, Royal Corps of Signals
August 2025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Delivering new and improved Defence infrastructure on behalf of the MOD.
Providing the best possible environments for soldiers to live, work and train across the Salisbury Plain Training Area and Aldershot.
Aspire Defence thank our armed forces, and all who serve, in this VE Day/VJ Day 80th anniversary year
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MAKING SOLDIERS' LIVES BETTER.

MESSAGE FROM

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin KCB ADC

Chief of the Defence Staff

This year marks the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan - two defining moments in our shared history that brought a hard-won peace to a world torn by war. The conclusion of the Second World War stands not merely as a chapter in history, but as a testament to the power of unity, sacrifice, and moral resolve.

The Allied triumph in 1945 was built on absolute trust and coordination among nations spanning continents. From the United States and Canada to Britain and her Empire, and the Free Forces of occupied Europe, millions stood shoulder to shoulder in defence of liberty. VE and VJ Day symbolise not only military victory, but the triumph of shared values over tyranny: values of freedom, self-determination, and the rule of law.

The origins of this enduring alliance were etched into history with the signing of the Atlantic Charter - conceived during the momentous meeting between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt off the coast of Newfoundland. Their vision offered hope of a post-war world grounded in democracy and peace. Today, that vision remains a guiding light.

Yet, as we commemorate this 80th anniversary, we are reminded with sorrow that peace cannot be taken for granted. Europe once again witnesses war on its soil. The people of Ukraine, in defending their homeland, are also upholding the same universal principles that shaped the Allied stand eight decades ago. Sovereignty, freedom, and justice - these are the values that must endure. The United Kingdom remains steadfast in its support, and the principle of collective defence, enshrined in NATO, continues to anchor our national and continental security.

This anniversary is also a moment to pay enduring tribute to the millions who served in the Second World War. From the battlefields to the laboratories, from encrypted signals to supply chains, their contributions formed an unbreakable chain of effort and resolve. Engineers, codebreakers, meteorologists, and factory workers - all played their part in a society wholly committed to one purpose: victory.

Today's soldiers, sailors, and aviators bear their mantle. The legacy of those who fought and fell now lives in the dedication of our Armed Forces, who remain committed to protecting the freedoms bequeathed by history's greatest generation. It is a duty borne with reverence and pride.

As time passes and the voices of our veterans grow fewer, we renew our solemn vow: we will remember them. Not only in silence and ceremony, but through our actions, alliances, and unwavering defence of the principles for which they gave so much. Eighty years on, their courage still echoes - and so too must our commitment.

2025

SUPPORTING THE ROYAL MARINES FAMILY

The Royal Marines Shop is wholly owned by RMA - The Royal Marines Charity. All of our profits go back to the Charity and help support the Corps Family.

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Message from
Field Marshal The Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank
GCB, GCVO, OBE, DL

Image Aliona Adrianova

As we gather to mark the anniversaries of Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan, we do so not in celebration alone, but in solemn remembrance. These dates, etched into the national memory, signify the end of a global conflict that claimed millions of lives and reshaped the world. For Britain, they mark the culmination of a long and bitter struggle - fought not only on the beaches of Normandy or in the skies above the Channel, but in the dense jungles of Burma and the waters of the Far East.

British forces served with distinction across every theatre of the Second World War. On VE Day, the nation rejoiced, yet even amid the relief, there was grief - for the fallen, the wounded, and the missing. And for those still fighting in the Pacific, the war was far from over. The men of the Fourteenth Army, often called the “Forgotten Army,” endured some of the harshest conditions of the war. Their victory, finally secured on VJ Day, deserves equal reverence.

In today’s uncertain world, the lessons of 1945 feel more urgent than ever. The peace secured by that generation was not permanent - it was a foundation. As conflict returns to parts of Europe and global tensions rise, we are reminded that the freedoms we enjoy were hard-won and must be safeguarded.

This Journal is not only a tribute to those who served, but a reaffirmation of our collective memory. The medals worn by veterans, the names engraved on memorials, the silence we hold together - these are acts of remembrance, but also of responsibility. They remind us that the legacy of VE and VJ Day is not confined to history books. It lives on in the values we uphold, the unity we foster, and the peace we strive to preserve.

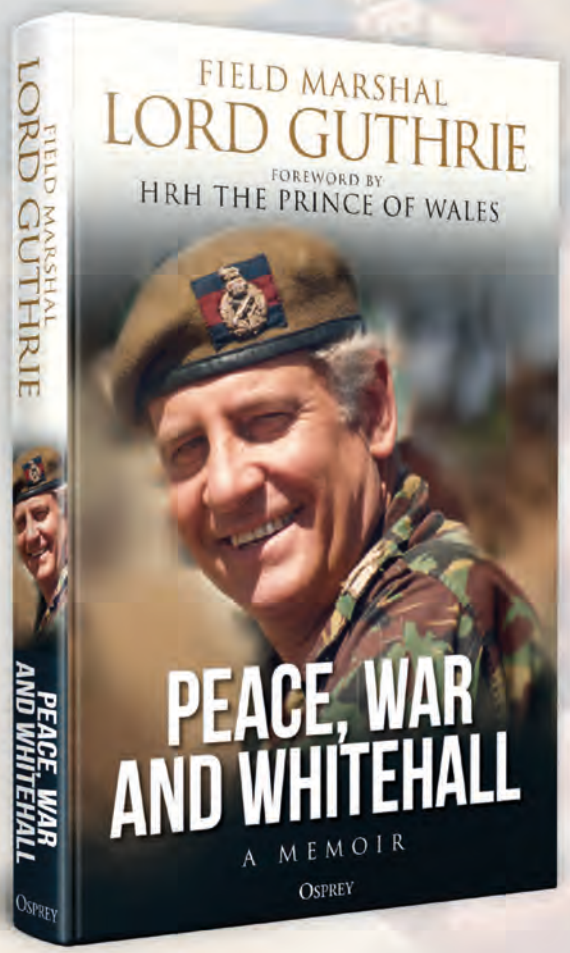
Let us honour their courage not only with words, but with vigilance. Let us remember not only their victory, but their sacrifice. And let us ensure that the world they fought to protect remains worthy of their devotion.

Lest we forget.

2025

FIELD MARSHAL
LORD GUTHRIE

FOREWORD BY
HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES



PEACE, WAR AND WHITEHALL

A MEMOIR

Peace, War and Whitehall details the extraordinary career of Field Marshal the Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank.

PRAISE FOR
PEACE, WAR AND WHITEHALL

'A lively and engaging account of a life well lived... [a] fascinating memoir.'

LADY ANTONIA FRASER

'Charles Guthrie has been one of Britain's foremost soldiers as well as a terrific personality throughout his remarkable life. It is great that he is now telling his own story.'

SIR MAX HASTINGS

'[Lord Guthrie's] boldness and humour make the book fizz.'

MICHAEL PORTILLO

'Pithy, humorous, engaging but above all wise... will guide future generations of our military leaders, but will also fascinate the general reader for their insights into how world-changing decisions are made.'

PROFESSOR ANDREW ROBERTS

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THE GRENADIER GUARDS

(THE GUARDS DIVISION)

Remembering all who served
80th Anniversary VE/VJ Day

Once a Grenadier, always a Grenadier

THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY

We proudly remember those who secured peace
80th Anniversary VE and VJ Day

HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY FOUNDATION

THE
WELSH GUARDS
(THE GUARDS DIVISION)

Remembering all who served
80th Anniversary VE/VJ Day

COMBAT STRESS
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

THE CHANGING FACE OF PTSD

Dr Naomi Wilson

Clinical Director, Combat Stress

Our understanding of the enduring impact of trauma is becoming increasingly sophisticated and in 2019 a new diagnosis of Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) was incorporated in the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases.

One of the main differences between PTSD and C-PTSD is our understanding of the causes of each. Typically, PTSD might be caused by a specific event or events while C-PTSD is caused by prolonged or repeated trauma over a significant period where escape may be very difficult or impossible. C-PTSD can be understood as PTSD with three additional groups of symptoms – negative sense of self, relationships with others and severe emotional difficulties.

Following the introduction of this diagnosis, our research team, in collaboration with other international experts in the field, have rapidly become leaders in C-PTSD research. Studies exploring how common C-PTSD is in those veterans asking for mental health treatment and new treatments for C-PTSD are some of the first in the world. These treatments will help not only the military community but other populations with C-PTSD and are actively informing our treatment for veterans and how we introduce innovation in care for those with C-PTSD.

Data driven care that improves outcomes

We continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of our treatments for PTSD and C-PTSD for those veterans who seek our help. By giving greater access to the information veterans provide us, we seek to empower them to work collaboratively with clinicians to ensure that the care they are receiving is working as well as possible. Collecting and using clinical data in this way helps us refine our care, support excellence in clinical practice, and deliver better outcomes for veterans.

Delivering personalised care

Every veteran who seeks our help has a unique history and current circumstances. We recognise how important it is that veterans can receive not only effective, evidence-based treatment for PTSD or C-PTSD but that this is tailored to their individual needs.

We meet with veterans to assess their mental health difficulties in the specific context of their life now; understanding their strengths and capabilities and seek to understand what they want to be different and what recovery means for them. We use this information to talk to each veteran about the treatments most likely to work for them and help them think about the choices available to them also based on what they might prefer. Whilst all evidence-based psychological therapy for PTSD involves revisiting the traumas causing such difficulty now, personalised care means we ensure we can talk through treatment options and also how we plan treatment for each veteran session by session.

Embracing trauma informed services

Trauma informed care increases awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, particularly their ability to feel safe or form lasting relationships – this can include those with healthcare services and their staff.

At Combat Stress, we train all our staff (both clinical and non-clinical) to enable them to consistently respond to veterans who have experienced trauma in a way that prevents further harm and supports their recovery. We want to prevent retraumatisation by ensuring every interaction a veteran has with us enables them to feel safe and confident in the service we provide. All staff work to the principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment and sensitivity to the culture and needs of the veteran community. Our intention is to provide experiences that contrast with that of trauma.

Together these advances reflect our unwavering commitment to delivering world-class compassionate care that evolves alongside our understanding of the impact of trauma and recovery from PTSD.

For more information about Combat Stress please visit **combatstress.org.uk**

VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

Combat Stress Learning provides **veteran specific mental health training for professionals and family members, friends and carers** in two separate learning communities.

Bite-sized e-learning courses take 15 minutes to complete, allowing you to learn at your own pace and at a time that works for you. The training materials are available 24/7 and on multiple devices such as laptops, mobile phones and tablets.

Live online events throughout the year focusing on important topics and bringing learners together. We aim to foster an environment where diverse voices are celebrated, and cross-sector expertise and lived experience is freely shared.

An online forum allows learners and experts to ask questions and share knowledge and resources. We place a high value on collaboration and peer education across the veteran sector.

Learn about

- Trauma and PTSD
- How to take a trauma informed approach
- Marginalised groups
- Employing veterans
- Safeguarding
- Suicide prevention
- High risk groups
- Challenging stigma

To sign up visit: learning.combatstress.org.uk

This training is fully funded by

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LEARNING GIVEBACK AWARD
2025 BRONZE WINNER

COMBAT STRESS LEARNING

MESSAGE FROM

Major General Jo Chestnutt CBE

Master General of Logistics

The 80th Anniversaries of victory in Europe (VE) and Victory over Japan (VJ) are a cause for celebration, and reflection. For both, we must pause to honour and celebrate the immense personal contributions made by so many across both theatres of the Second World War.

History is rich with stories of the role our forebearers of The Royal Logistic Corps played on the European Continent, and across the vast and unforgiving landscapes of the Far East.

During the D-Day landings of June 1944 - and the subsequent Allied advance - the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC), Pioneer Corps and Army Catering Corps delivered incredible service under extraordinary pressure. In the days and weeks following the Normandy invasion, the RASC and RAOC had already covertly amassed and delivered immense stores across the Channel, often in perilous conditions. The Pioneer Corps, in a feat of herculean effort, moved 80,000 tons of ammunition in the first ten days alone. At the same time, the Army Catering Corps ensured that, despite incoming fire and shifting frontlines, hot meals reached those fighting to establish and expand the beachheads.

Vital too was the effort to maintain the lifeblood of the advance - fuel. RASC and Pioneer Companies played a critical role in the construction of the Pipeline Under The Ocean (PLUTO), enabling the direct supply of petrol to France. On the beaches, Ordnance Beach Detachments employed ingenuity to deliver essential supplies and ammunition via specially designed containers under 100 lbs in weight, light enough to be carried ashore by hand under fire. Across all our forming Corps, the courage, professionalism and quiet determination of these logistical troops enabled the successful landing of over 150,000 Allied personnel on D-Day, with a steady stream continuing until Nazi Germany's culmination on 7 May 1945.

Yet even as victory was secured in Europe, our predecessors continued the fight in the East. Throughout the jungles of Burma and the islands of the Pacific, the same Corps specialists displayed unrelenting resolve, maintaining the flow of ammunition, rations and medical supplies to troops often isolated and fighting in the most inhospitable conditions. These efforts were instrumental in bringing about final victory over Japan on 15 August 1945.

In commemorating VE80 and VJ80, we remember with pride and humility the critical role played by our antecedent Corps. Their legacy endures not only in the campaigns they sustained, but in the values, we continue to uphold today - service, resilience, and unwavering commitment to mission. ***We sustain.***

2025

THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS

'We Sustain'

The Corps is proud to remember and pay tribute, on this 80th Anniversary, to our antecedents who served during the VE and VJ Campaigns.

Royal Corps of Transport

Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Royal Pioneer Corps

Army Catering Corps

Royal Engineers Postal Branch

If you would like to help support The RLC Charity or get in touch please visit our website

www.royallogisticcorps.co.uk

Soldiers of the Pioneer Corps attending the VE Day Parade in Ostend, May 1945

ONCE THE FIGHTING IS OVER

The Royal Logistic Corps antecedent contribution to Peace

VE Day (Victory in Europe) and VJ Day (Victory over Japan) occurred on the 8th of May and 15th of August 1945 respectively. Whilst three months apart, together they mark the end of a brutal conflict which had engulfed most of the world with battles occurring on nearly every continent.

The antecedent Corps of The Royal Logistic Corps played a pivotal role during this war, during its conclusion and in the protracted clean-up operations that followed.

The Royal Army Service Corps and **Royal Army Ordnance Corps** equipped, supplied and transported an immense and dispersed Army in every theatre of military operations, from the heat of North Africa and the Middle East to the dense jungles of Burma, and across the expanse of Western Europe.

After the war, vast stockpiles of both allied and enemy ammunition, vehicles and equipment required centralising, processing and transporting. Moving an Army home, with millions of soldiers eager to see loved ones again, required detailed planning and executing.

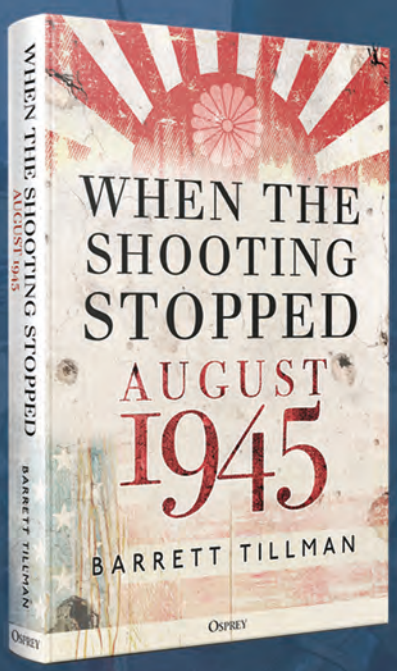
The demobilisation centres opened just six weeks after VE Day and by December 1946 around 4.2 million British Servicemen and women had been demobilised. Men were provided with civilian clothes called "Demob Suits" and women were given a cash grant and clothing coupons. Back pay and a train ticket home were also provided.

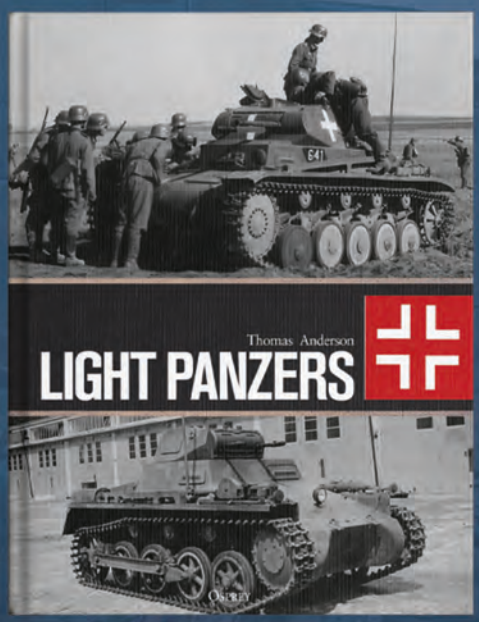
The **Pioneer Corps**, supported by huge numbers of locally employed civilians, helped repair vital infrastructure, roads and railways. Burying the war dead and erecting cemeteries was an unpleasant but very necessary task which needed undertaking. Moreover, the Pioneer Corps became responsible for guarding, collecting and administratively processing thousands of Prisoners of War and concentration camps, including at Belsen. They also managed those displaced - mainly Eastern Europeans – who were formed into Labour Groups, each consisting of 1,000 labourers and they were issued Battle Dress dyed green. Many of these personnel were to continue working for the British Army for the rest of their working lives.

The Army Catering Corps fed up to 2,500 soldiers a day as the British Army moved home via a string of hastily erected transit camps. At Scharnhorst Barracks in Osnabrück the Catering Corps had to cater for 8,000 soldiers a day. As well as soldiers, the ACC often had to feed thousands of Prisoners of War, displaced people and sometimes the civilian population in areas under British control. Feeding Japanese PoWs meant procuring stocks of rice and soya beans and learning how to cook new recipes and unfamiliar dishes.

Transitioning from war to peace quickly became a logistic and administrative operation. The skills learnt then are as appropriate now in the modern battlefield. The ability to prepare, project, enable, sustain and recover war-fighters defines the modern Royal Logistic Corps soldier; one who's proud of the vital and selfless contribution of those who gave their all once the fighting was over.

Soldiers of 82 Company Pioneer Corps celebrate the end of war in Europe, May 1945





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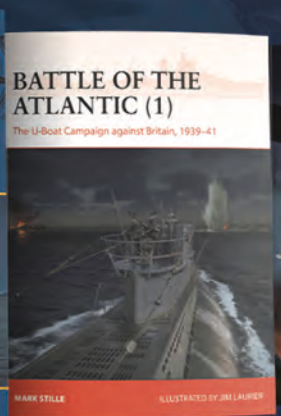

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Parco Victory Festival & Air Display

Held on the South Coast in the seaside village of Lee on the Solent, Hampshire where we come together for several days of Celebration and Entertainment for the commemoration and remembrance of the 80th Anniversary of VE & VJ Days delivered by Montserrat Events CIC.

Since starting in 2021 as a delayed celebration of the 75th anniversary of D-day due to Covid the event has grown and we're back for our third event being held every other year.

The event starts on the Saturday with a military parade through Lee with representatives from local naval bases, HMS Sultan and HMS Collingwood who will be marching with bayonets fixed for the first time. They will be accompanied by marching bands and a pipe band as well as representatives from youth groups, veterans and military vehicles. The parade will view a display by Warbirds over the Solent before moving off for a salute taken by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire or his representative.

Following the parade the main event will start on the historic Fleet Air Arm airfield HMS Daedalus, which was the airfield which had the greatest number of sorties flown on D-Day 1944.

For 2025, the Parco Victory Festival and Air Display will be held on the 19th and 20th September where we will have an amazing Air Display by on both days as well as static aircraft on display. Flying proceedings will be opened by the Royal Navy Parachute Team and aircraft displaying will include:

Gazelle Squadron Display Team
Supermarine Spitfire RR232
Hispano HA-1112-M1L Buchon 'White 9'
Hawker Hurricane I R4118 - G-HUPW
P-51D Mustang 'Miss Helen" - 44-72216
Jubilee Pitts - G-OKAY
The Stampe Formation Team
SIAI-Marchetti SF.260 - G-RAZI
Yak50
Catalina – G-PBYA
Mk IX Spitfire - LZ842
BBMF Spitfires
Aerosuperbatics Wingwalkers - N5057V & GIIIY
Fairey Swordfish - W5856

Activities will take place throughout the weekend in the arena, including the restoration of Naval Field Gun Running. There will also be Living History Re-enactors to talk to and an array of WWII and Post War Vehicles to inspect. Several Military Charities will have a presence to promote the work done in support of military personnel.

Other attractions include a Funfair for children, Music, Song and Dance for Adults as well as Pop-Up Food & Beverage Stalls, and Craft stalls.

In 2026, we are excited to be moving to a brand new venue in the centre of Hampshire, which provides us with the ability to create an even greater air display due to the fewer flying restrictions in the area surrounding the airfield plus fantastic viewing areas, facilities and parking space. At the same time, we will rename the event as the "Hampshire Victory Air Festival" and it will become an annual event.

HAMPSHIRE
VICTORY AIR FESTIVAL

www.montserratevents.co.uk

Remembering with Victory Boulevard

As part of our remembrance for those who made the ultimate sacrifice, in September 2021 at the Lee Victory Festival a series of the road name plaques were produced and placed around the event flagpole, these were arranged completely at random so as not to give priority to any road or any name, visitors had to work their way through the plaques and would be made to look at as many as possible.

This aspect of the event proved very popular, where we received amazing feedback from the public. The plaques were reused for Remembrance Day 2021 and placed around the War memorial with similar effect.

For the Victory Festival 2023 we have created Victory Boulevard as a wide entrance Showpiece to make you think about the sacrifice made be those men and women from our war memorials. The boards contains names from The Great War, WW2, The Malayan conflict, and The Falklands War. Again, they will be placed randomly to make people read as many of these articles as possible.

We look forward to delivering our 2025 Victory Boulevard.

Never Forgotten.

VICTORY FESTIVAL

Parco Victory Festival & Air Display

19-21 September 2025 Celebrating and Remembering the

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Becoming the **Hampshire Victory Air Festival** from 2026

"My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole. We were the first, in this ancient island, to draw the sword against tyranny. After a while we were left all alone against the most tremendous military power that has been seen. We were all alone for a whole year.

There we stood, alone. Did anyone want to give in? Were we downhearted? The lights went out and the bombs came down. But every man, woman and child in the country had no thought of quitting the struggle. London can take it.

So, we came back after long months from the jaws of death, out of the mouth of hell, while all the world wondered. When shall the reputation and faith of this generation of English men and women fail?

I say that in the long years to come not only will the people of this island but of the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look back to what we've done and they will say "do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straightforward and die if need be - unconquered."

Now we have emerged from one deadly struggle-a terrible foe has been cast on the ground and awaits our judgment and our mercy.

But there is another foe who occupies large portions of the British Empire, a foe stained with cruelty and greed-the Japanese. I rejoice we can all take a night off today and another day tomorrow.

Tomorrow our great Russian allies will also be celebrating victory and after that we must begin the task of rebuilding our hearth and homes, doing our utmost to make this country a land in which all have a chance, in which all have a duty, and we must turn ourselves to fulfil our duty to our own countrymen, and to our gallant allies of the United States who were so foully and treacherously attacked by Japan.

We will go hand and hand with them. Even if it is a hard struggle, we will not be the ones who will fail."

Winston Churchill, 8th May 1945

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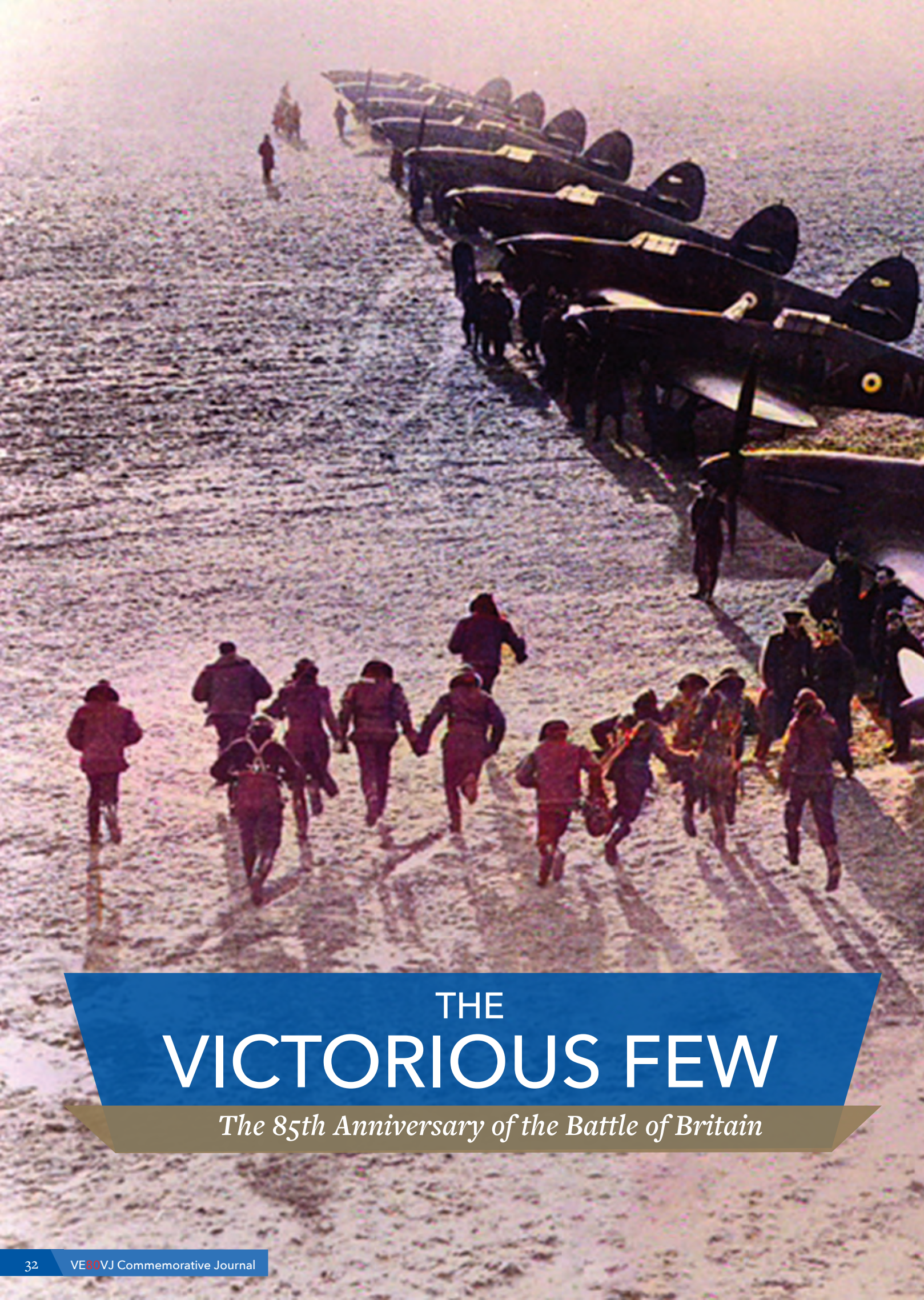

THE VICTORIOUS FEW

The 85th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain


LK O
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The Luftwaffe launched its main assault on 13 August - Adlertag ('Eagle Day') and British fighters continued to be heavily committed to containing daylight raids well into the autumn. British preparations had been handicapped in the 1930s by the air ministry's reluctance to accept the possibility of close fighter defence, preferring the doctrine of defence through counter-attack by bombers. The diplomatic requirements of appeasement had also favoured priority for bombers, as a form of deterrent against German aggression.

It was not until early 1938 that Fighter Command was given full priority. Air Chief Marshal Dowding, commander of Fighter Command since its formation in 1936, therefore had very little time to make his force ready.

The technological breakthroughs which were to be so important in the battle, moreover, were of only recent origin: the basic principle of radar was first demonstrated only in 1935, the Spitfire and Hurricane fighters only began to enter service in any numbers in 1939.

Dowding had to work rapidly to link these developments together with an efficient communications network based on the group and the sector system, the basic system of fighter control used in the battle. In the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that some slight flaws were to be detected in Fighter Command's ground organisation. In August 1940, however, the virtually untried matrix of technology meshed successfully together. Fighter Command's problems were compounded by the defeats of the first year of the war. The campaigns on the European mainland reduced Dowding's aircraft and pilot reserves.

Though the mobilisation of the aircraft industry in the last year of peace was bearing fruit by the summer of 1940, so much so that Fighter Command was never seriously worried by lack of aircraft during that year, the provision of fully-trained pilots to make good losses was to prove more problematical. New dispositions also had to be made hurriedly to cover attacks from the Low Countries (Luftflotte 2) and northern France (Luftflotte 3), as well as long-range attacks from Scandinavia (Luftflotte 5).

The weight of the attacks was likely to fall on 11 Group in the South-East, commanded by Air Vice Marshal Park, and on 12 Group in east Anglia and the Midlands, commanded by Air Vice Marshal Leigh-Mallory, but Dowding could not expose his flanks by denuding 10 Group in the South-West or 13 Group in the North and Scotland. In the early summer of 1940, Fighter Command hoped to have 60 squadrons ready by September, whereas some in the air ministry calculated that 120 squadrons were needed to achieve security. Dowding would have to rely on economy of effort or mistakes on the part of the Luftwaffe commanders.

The aim of the German offensive itself was also problematic. The Luftwaffe owed its recent success to the fact that it had been working in close support of the army. This time it was given an independent task to prepare for SEALION, which would not proceed until this task had been achieved. Any short-term success, therefore, could not be immediately followed up on the ground. There was also to be some confusion as to how the aim should be achieved. Target selection moved between coastal convoys, Fighter Command advanced aerodromes, sector stations, the aerodromes of Coastal and Bomber Commands (the utility of which was questionable in a search for command of the air), aircraft and related industries, as well as other industrial targets which were of general military value but not vital to the air war. In particular, the Luftwaffe did not make any concerted attempt to destroy the eyes of Fighter Command, the radar chain.

the weaknesses of the Luftwaffe were not apparent at the time

The weaknesses of the Luftwaffe were not apparent at the time. It took only six minutes to cross the Channel to Dover, and only ten minutes longer for German bombers to be over 11 Group's sector airfields. The bomber waves could be picked up by radar as they massed south of Cap Gris Nez, but it took four minutes for radar information to reach the squadrons and thirteen minutes for a Spitfire to get to 6,100 m. (20,000 ft.), while top-cover Me1O9 escorts often came in at 7,900 m. (26,000 ft). Expert though they became, radar operators often found it difficult to predict the size and height of approaching bomber formations.

Fighter Command's advanced information was sparse and rarely covered planned raids in the degree of detail Dowding needed for effective preparation. The gravest danger was that diversionary raids would commit 11 Group to attack well away from their airfields while the main attack then fell on their ground organisation. To guard against this, 12 Group was often committed to guard 11's airfields. This enforced dispersal meant that Fighter Command was seldom able to achieve the kind of concentration that could wreak havoc among the bombers.

Before September, Park's 11 Group was rarely given time to mass an attack on the bombers. The Luftwaffe's basic tactical unit was the Gruppe of 30 aircraft, while that of Fighter Command was

All that remains of a German bomber brought down on the English south-east coast, on July 13, 1940. The aircraft is riddled with bullet holes and its machine guns were twisted out of action.

the squadron of 12. To attack before the bombers reached their targets, Park often had little option but to commit his fighters cumulatively in penny packets of single squadron strength. Only as experience was gained. and as the bomber attacks became more predictable, was it possible to mount simultaneous multi-squadron attacks as a matter of course. Eventually 12 Group was able to build the Duxford 'Big Wing', five squadrons of Hurricanes and Spitfires working as a single tactical unit of 60 aircraft.

Through June and July and up to 12 August, the Luftwaffe concentrated its attack on shipping in the Channel, hoping to stretch Fighter Command's resources by forcing the British to adopt close fighter escort for this important coastal traffic. These attacks were supplemented by relatively light raids on south coast ports. In this period 30,000 tons of shipping were lost, but that was out of a total of almost a million tons a week passing through the Channel. By the end of July, meanwhile, German planning for SEALION had reached something of an impasse, with the army and navy commands at odds over the landing zones and the time it would take to transport the initial echelons across the Channel.

Hitler accepted that the invasion could not take place before mid-September, and that it could not take place at all in 1940 unless the RAF was defeated. The Luftwaffe was therefore ordered to destroy the British Air Force as soon as possible. On 12 August, which saw the first concerted attacks on British fighter aerodromes, the Ventnor radar station was put out of service. During the next two weeks, however, the Luftwaffe failed to concentrate on these most important targets. 'Eagle Day', 13 August, proved a damp squib when bad weather led to a series of badly co-ordinated Luftwaffe attacks. Two days later, the three Luftflotten attacked in concert, but the weakly defended attack from Scandinavia suffered particularly heavy losses to 12 and 13 Groups, the Luftwaffe losing 75 aircraft in 24 hours to Fighter Command's 34. This was to prove to be Luftflotte 5's first and last major intervention in the battle of Britain.

A Nazi Heinkel He 111 bomber flies over London in the autumn of 1940. The Thames River runs through the image.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SQUADRONS

On 9 November 1960, the Air Ministry published Air Ministry Order N850 which officially defined the qualifications for aircrew to be classified as having participated in the Battle of Britain. The AMO also defined the squadrons that were deemed to have fought in the battle under the control of RAF Fighter Command between 0001 hours on 10 July and 2359 hours on 31 October 1940; the official beginning and end of the battle.

A total of 71 squadrons and other units from Fighter Command, Coastal Command and the Fleet Air Arm are listed.

ACCREDITED SQUADRONS

HURRICANE
No. 1 (Cawnpore) Squadron RAF
No. 3 Squadron RAF
No. 17 Squadron RAF
No. 32 Squadron RAF
No. 41 Squadron RAF
No. 43 (China-British) Squadron RAF
No. 46 (Uganda) Squadron RAF
No. 56 (Punjab) Squadron RAF
No. 73 Squadron RAF
No. 79 (Madras Presidency) Squadron RAF
No. 85 Squadron RAF
No. 87 (United Provinces) Squadron RAF
No. 145 Squadron RAF
No. 151 Squadron RAF
No. 213 (Ceylon) Squadron RAF
No. 229 Squadron RAF
No. 232 Squadron RAF
No. 238 Squadron RAF
No. 242 (Canadian) Squadron RAF
No. 245 (Northern Rhodesia) Squadron RAF
No. 249 (Gold Coast) Squadron RAF
No. 253 (Hyderabad) Squadron RAF
No. 257 (Burma) Squadron RAF
No. 263 (Fellowship of the Bellows) Squadron RAF Fighter Interception Unit

SPITFIRE
No. 19 Squadron RAF
No. 54 Squadron RAF
No. 64 Squadron RAF
No. 65 (East India) Squadron RAF
No. 66 Squadron RAF
No. 72 (Basutoland) Squadron RAF
No. 74 Squadron RAF
No. 92 (East India) Squadron RAF
No. 111 Squadron RAF
No. 152 (Hyderabad) Squadron RAF
No. 222 (Natal) Squadron RAF
No. 234 (Madras Presidency) Squadron RAF
No. 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron RAF
No. 421 Flight RAF
No. 422 Flight RAF

BLENHEIM/BEAUFIGHTER
No. 23 Squadron RAF
No. 25 Squadron RAF
No. 29 Squadron RAF
No. 219 (Mysore) Squadron RAF

BOULTON PAUL DEFIANT
No. 141 Squadron RAF
No. 264 (Madras Presidency) Squadron RAF

GLOSTER GLADIATOR
No. 247 (China – British) Squadron RAF

AUXILIARY SQUADRONS

HURRICANE (Auxiliary Air Force)
No. 501 (County of Gloucester) Squadron
No. 504 (City of Nottingham) Squadron
No. 601 (County of London) Squadron
No. 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron
No. 607 (County of Durham) Squadron
No. 615 (County of Surrey) Squadron

SPITFIRE (Auxiliary Air Force)
No. 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron
No. 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron
No. 609 (West Riding) Squadron
No. 610 (County of Chester) Squadron
No. 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron
No. 616 (South Yorkshire) Squadron

BLENHEIM/BEAUFIGHTER (AuxAF)
No. 600 (City of London) Squadron
No. 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron

COMMONWEALTH & ALLIED SQUADRONS

HURRICANE
No. 1 Squadron RCAF (Canadian)
302 (City of Poznan) Squadron (Pole)
303 (Warsaw – Kosciuszko) Squadron (Pole)
No. 310 (Czechoslovak) Squadron (Czech)
No. 312 (Czechoslovak) Squadron (Czech)

COASTAL COMMAND SQUADRONS

BLENHEIM
No. 235 Squadron RAF
No. 236 Squadron RAF
No. 248 Squadron RAF

FLEET AIR ARM SQUADRONS
No. 804 Squadron FAA
(Gloster Sea Gladiator/Grumman Martlet)
No. 804 Squadron FAA (Fairey Fulmar)

Both sides were already greatly overestimating the losses they had inflicted on one another, but the German intelligence failures were to prove the more fateful. The Luftwaffe believed that the British were down to a front line strength of only 300. In fact, Dowding had lost only 200 aircraft and the front line remained at about 600. Nevertheless, the next stage in the battle was to prove the most dangerous for the British.

In the brief respite afforded by poor weather between 19 and 24 August, Goring decided on a change of tactics, forcing air battles between fighters to break what he believed was the dwindling strength of Fighter Command. This was to be achieved by smaller concentrations of bombers, with relatively larger and closer escort forces, attacking targets the British were bound to defend, airfields in particular.

The remaining bombers were to concentrate on unescorted night attacks to stretch the defences and to maintain the strain on British nerves. This was to prove a much more effective policy but, it was based on the assumption that Fighter Command was already close to defeat, its failure to bring early decisive results tested German confidence in the feasibility of launching SEALION in 1940. Fighter Command believed that it had too often allowed itself to get involved in battles with the escorts, and that it should concentrate more closely on the bombers. This approach was to be blocked by the new German tactics, and British losses edged close to those of the Luftwaffe in the next weeks.

Strong and partly successful attacks on Biggin Hill, Hornchurch, North Weald and West Malling severely tested 11 Group's organisation at the end of August and the beginning of September. This led to a dispute between the commanders of 11 and 12 Groups about the defence of 11's airfields while Park's fighters were in the air. It was 12 Group's contention that requests for support from 11 often came too late and that the massing of larger formations of defenders to hit the bombers would have much greater effect, even if this took time. Events were soon to provide an opportunity for the 'Big Wing' tactics to be put to the proof.

There is still much controversy about the origins of the German decision to switch the weight of their bombing from the airfields to London. One view is that an unintentional German attack on London prompted the British air ministry to attack Berlin on 25 August, an attack which so incensed Hitler that he was determined to retaliate.

The attacks on London began in earnest in daylight on 7 September. Fighter Command expecting continued attacks on its airfields, was caught unprepared. Huge fires were left burning in the East End, providing beacons for the follow-up night attack.

The next day, however, the Duxford wing abandoned the airfields, it was asked to defend north of the Thames and met the bombers as they came over south-west London, an intervention which may have unnerved some in 11 Group but the success of which was to be confirmed a week later.

On 15 September the Luftwaffe abandoned its usual practice of sending up feints and diversions, so that the radar network was left in no doubt about the main attack by mid-morning. Park was thus given time to meet the bombers with paired squadrons as far forward as Canterbury, and the 'Big Wing' made contact over East London. A second attack in the afternoon met a similarly prepared defence.

On 'Battle of Britain Day', 15 September, the defence claimed to have shot down 185 German aircraft. In fact, the Luftwaffe had lost only 60, but that brought the tally of losses since 7 September to about 175, enough to test severely the confidence of a force which had been engaged virtually continuously for two months, and which had believed it was on the verge of victory.

Two days later SEALION was indefinitely postponed. Although daylight raids continued until the weather worsened in October, their strength was gradually reduced as the bombers switched to night attacks. The Luftwaffe priority was no longer only the defeat of the RAF, the battle of Britain had merged imperceptibly into the BIitz on London and other cities.

The figures of losses remain controversial, but the best estimates suggest that, between 10 July and 31 October, Fighter Command had lost approximately 788 and the Luftwaffe 1,294 aircraft.

The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral (undamaged) stands out among the flames and smoke of surrounding buildings during heavy attacks of the German Luftwaffe on December 29, 1940

KEY DATES

June 18 France seeks an armistice

June 18 British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gives his famous speech declaring the 'Battle of Britain'

July 10 Germany launches its first aerial attack on Britain

Luftwaffe Phase 1 July 10 - August 12 Germany focuses its attacks on shipping conveys in the English Channel.

There were widespread night-time raids all along the coast.

July 16 Hitler issued the famous directive number 16, stating his intention to wage battle with Britain's 'hopeless military situation'.

He added: 'I have decided to begin to prepare for and, if necessary, to carry out an invasion of England.'

August 1 Germany airdrop leaflets over Britain entitled 'A Last Appeal to Reason'

August 13 Germany lands a huge blow when it hit vital radar masts at key airfields in the South. Known as Eagle Day' (Adlertag)

Luftwaffe Phase 2 August 13 - August 18 Airfields and radar stations became the focus of German bombing as it focused on destroying the aircraft of Fighter Command.

Airfields in the south east of England suffered the heaviest attacks.

Luftwaffe Phase 3 August 19 – September 6 The Luftwaffe continued to bomb towns and cities and turns its attention away from airfields.

August 20 Churchill gave one of the most famous speeches of his premiership when he said: 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'

August 24 Luftwaffe , under clear orders not to bomb London, mistake the capital for military targets

August 25 Churchill retaliates and sends 40 planes to bomb Berlin

The hero pilots of the Battle of Britain became known as ***'the Few'.***

August 31 British fighter command suffers its heaviest losses yet. It activates squadron 303 of Polish aces.

September 15 The RAF destroy a huge formation of Luftwaffe over London and forced Hitler to abandon the battle and shelve his plans for invasion.

It is henceforth known as **'Battle of Britain'** day

September 17 Hitler postponed the invasion of Britain (***Operation Sealion***) following heavy Luftwaffe losses

September 26 The Spitfire factory at Southampton was attacked and destroyed.

Image UK MOD © Crown Copyright 2024

Last of 'The Few'

The Last Surviving Battle of Britain Pilot, John Hemingway, Dies

With the passing of Group Captain John "Paddy" Hemingway at the age of 105, we bid farewell to the last surviving Battle of Britain pilot - a man whose courage helped shape history. His story is one of resilience, duty, and quiet humility, emblematic of the very spirit of "The Few." He defended Britain's skies during one of history's most pivotal conflicts.

Born in Dublin, Hemingway joined the Royal Air Force as a teenager, embarking on a career that would see him at the heart of one of the fiercest air battles of World War II. At just 21, he took to the skies in a relentless defence against the Luftwaffe during the three-month Battle of Britain - a fight that tested the endurance and bravery of the RAF's pilots. He was one of just thirty-six Irishmen who flew during the Battle of Britain.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer praised Hemingway's service, stating that his courage, along with that of his fellow airmen, "*helped end WWII and secure our freedom.*"

The Prince of Wales reflected on his legacy, expressing that "*we owe so much to Paddy and his generation for our freedoms today.*"

Hemingway's wartime experiences were nothing short of remarkable. His squadron shot down 90 enemy aircraft in an intense 11-day period during May 1940 and provided critical fighter cover in the Battle of France. Shot down four times, Hemingway narrowly escaped death on multiple occasions - bailing out over the sea, marshlands, and even enemy territory. Forced to make a crash landing near Maastricht after his plane was damaged, Paddy walked for three days to get to a British base. On 15th May, the British Army brought him to Lille-Seclin and he returned to England two days later, just as the Battle of Britain was about to commence.

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1941 for his acts of valour, though he never sought recognition.

"*I don't think we ever assumed greatness of any form,*" he once said. "*We were just fighting a war which we were trained to fight.*"

His humility remained a defining trait. Despite his extraordinary experiences, Hemingway's greatest sorrow was the loss of his comrades. "*My biggest regret was the loss of friends,*" he reflected, "*in particular that of Richard 'Dickie' Lee in August 1940.*"

The RAF honoured his passing, calling it "*the end of an era and a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom during World War II.*" The tribute described Hemingway as "*a quiet, composed, thoughtful and mischievous individual*" who embodied the enduring spirit of all those who risked their lives in Britain's defence.

Chief of the RAF Air Staff, Sir Rich Knighton, who met Hemingway earlier this year, described him as "*an amazing character whose life story embodies all that was and remains great about the Royal Air Force.*"

John "Paddy" Hemingway did not wish to be the last of "The Few." Yet in remembering his remarkable service, we ensure that their legacy - and his - endures.

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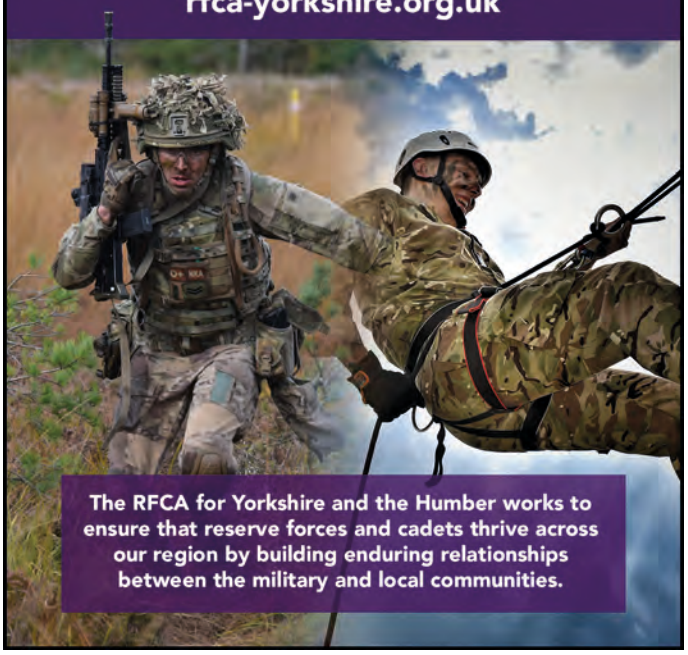

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CHURCHILL'S EYES IN THE SKIES

Recognition at Last

With 80 years having passed since the end of hostilities, a new Monument campaign is underway to honour a vital yet hitherto forgotten arm of Churchill's wartime eyes in the skies, call them indeed the fewest of his few. A small but incredibly hard-working and dedicated group of young men and women are working voluntarily to tell this, one of the most fantastic stories of our time, and it all started with a single blue Spitfire – Sandy's Spitfire.

Sandy Gunn, a 22-year-old apprentice engineer and his colleagues, formed part of a highly clandestine unarmed reconnaissance Squadron flying Spitfire and Mosquito aircraft from RAF Benson on highly secret tasks for Winston Churchill. Their work, hushed up at the time, spread across the world, from Oxfordshire to India, there was no region of the Allied operations during the last global conflict that RAF reconnaissance men did not cover.

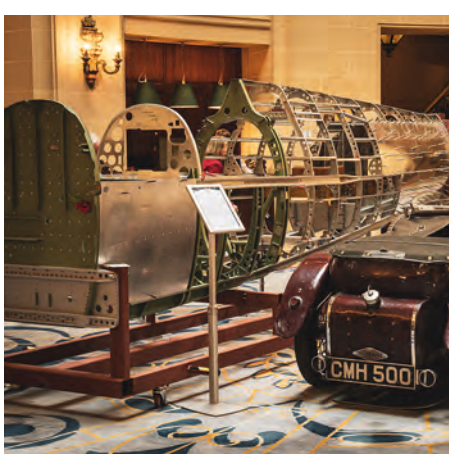
The RAF Photographic Reconnaissance Units (PRU) were formed on the 24th of September 1939 and throughout the Second World War they captured more than 26 million images of enemy operations and installations. Their purpose was to provide up-to-date intelligence to strategically plan the Allied actions in the war. The intelligence provided by the PRU was used in the Cabinet War Rooms – now the 'Churchill War Rooms' located underneath the Treasury – and was instrumental in the planning of major operations; D-Day and the Dambusters Raid, the monitoring of major shipping movements such as the Bismarck and Tirpitz, and the locating of the site of the V1 and V2 rocket launching site at Peenemünde, as well as many other intelligence successes.

Some 1,750 airmen flew these highly dangerous operations and to date nearly half of those men identified were casualties. Since 2019, the Spitfire AA810 Project has campaigned to establish such a memorial to these pilots and navigators, plus the 630 Photographic Interpreters who served on the ground to extract that intelligence. Now, with the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the Royal Parks and UK Government have agreed in principle for the monument to be established in Whitehall, just yards from the wartime War Rooms where that vital intelligence was used.

At the heart of this huge endeavour is Sandy's Spitfire, arguably the most historically significant aircraft under restoration today. Recovered in 2018 as part of an amazing adventure, the Spitfire AA810 Project are returning this incredible machine to the skies once again. Sandy, we hope would be most proud, although tragically he is unable to appreciate our work as he was murdered by the Gestapo in 1944 for his part in the Great Escape, an event immortalised forever in the Hollywood film of the same name.

Through our work with young people, we have built the restoration of Sandy's Spitfire into a huge programme by using the restoration for teaching transferable skills and creating opportunities for young people across all regions of the UK, providing this to nearly 2 million young people since 2019. Through this project, and this establishment of this new national monument, Sandy and his colleagues' lives serve as inspiration for others, inspiration based upon merit and achievement, and sadly too often personal sacrifice.

The restoration and the monument projects are always looking for support, if you are interested in knowing more, or are in a position to assist, please visit **www.spitfireaa810.co.uk** or email **info@spitfireaa810.co.uk** for more information.



VEVJ

COMMEMORATIVE COVERS

60th Anniversary VE/VJ Day

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£20.00

60th Anniversary VE/VJ Day

signed by
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The Right Honourable
The Lord Stirrup
KG GCB AFC FRAeS FCMI

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These two unique covers were originally signed to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of VE/VJ Day and now availble from **Horizon Pubications**. To order your copy please send cheques to: **Horizon Publications Limted, Horizon House, 4 Ravenswood Avenue, Wirral CH42 4NX.** All proceeds of the sale of covers are pledged to **The VC Trust - victoriacrosstrust.org**

THE BLITZ

85th Anniversary 1940 - 2025

Blitz, the German word for 'lightning', was applied by the British press to the tempest of heavy and frequent bombing raids carried out over Britain in 1940 and 1941. This concentrated direct bombing of industrial targets and civilian centres began on 7 September 1940, with heavy raids on London.

The scale of the attack rapidly escalated. In that month alone, the German Air Force dropped 5,300 tons of high explosives on the capital in just 24 nights. In their efforts to 'soften up' the British population and to destroy morale before the planned invasion, German planes extended their targets to include the major coastal ports and centres of production and supply.

The infamous raid of November 14 1940 on Coventry brought a still worse twist to the campaign. 500 German bombers dropped 500 tons of explosives and nearly 900 incendiary bombs on the city in ten hours of unrelenting bombardment, a tactic later emulated on an even greater scale by the RAF in their attacks on German cities.

The British population had been warned in September 1939 that air attacks on cities were likely and civil defence preparations had been started some time before, both on a national and a local level. Simple corrugated steel Anderson shelters, covered over by earth, were dug into gardens up and down the country. Larger civic shelters built of brick and concrete were erected in British towns and a blackout was rigorously enforced after darkness.

The night raids became so frequent that they were practically continuous. Many people who were tired of repeatedly interrupting their sleep to go back and forth to the street shelters, virtually took up residence in a shelter. This gave rise to a new spirit of solidarity and community.

Londoners took what seemed to them an obvious and sensible solution to the problem and moved down in their thousands into the tube stations. At first, this was actively discouraged by the government. However, this popular action held sway and it was a common sight for a traveller on the Underground in wartime London to pass through a station crowded with the sleeping bodies of men, women and children and their belongings.

The main air offensive against British cities diminished after May 1941, with the change of direction of the German war machine towards Russia. However, sporadic and lethal raids, using increasingly larger bombs, continued for several more years.

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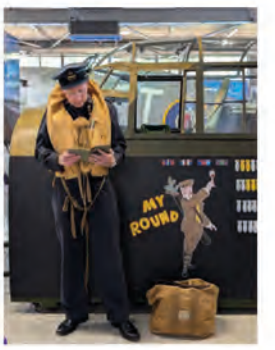


BLETCHLEY PARK

The Secret Weapon that helped win World War II

During the Second World War, one of Britain's most crucial contributions to the Allied victory did not come from the battlefield, but from a quiet countryside estate tucked away in Buckinghamshire. Bletchley Park, once a Victorian mansion and estate, became the epicentre of British code-breaking efforts - and played a decisive role in shortening the war, saving countless lives, and shaping the outcome of history.

A Hidden Nerve Centre of Intelligence

Bletchley Park was home to Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), a top-secret unit that brought together some of the finest minds in the country -mathematicians, linguists, chess champions, and crossword enthusiasts. Among its most famous personnel were Alan Turing, the pioneering computer scientist; Gordon Welchman, a mathematician and wartime innovator; and cryptanalyst Joan Clarke, one of the many women who made vital contributions to the war effort.

The park's main mission was to intercept and decipher enemy communications, particularly those encrypted by the German Enigma and Lorenz machines. These devices were designed to produce virtually unbreakable codes, and the German military believed their communications were secure. But at Bletchley, through a combination of mathematical brilliance, engineering innovation, and sheer perseverance, the code-breakers managed to crack them.

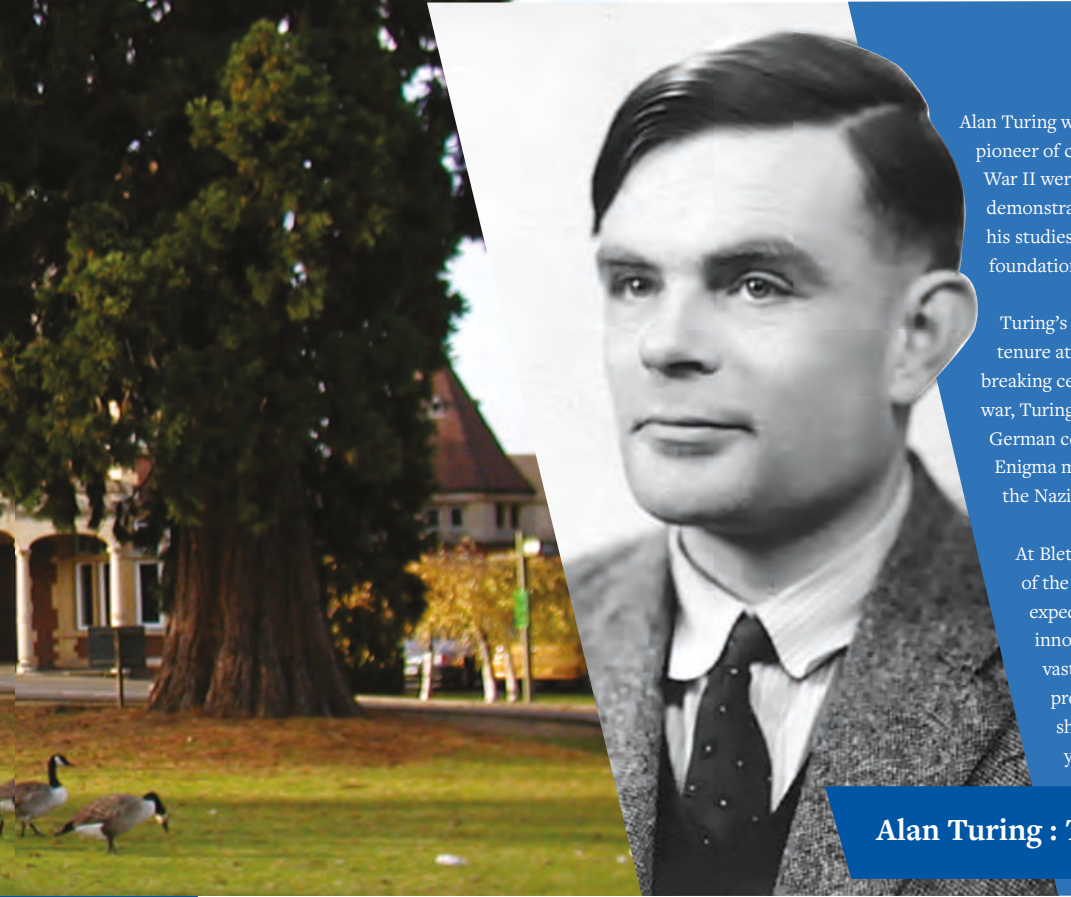
Breaking Enigma and the Allied Advantage

The most famous breakthrough came with the cracking of the Enigma cipher. Turing and his colleagues developed a machine known as the Bombe, which automated much of the process of deciphering Enigma messages. Later, the more complex Lorenz cipher used by Hitler's high command was also broken using Colossus - the world's first programmable electronic digital computer, built under the leadership of engineer Tommy Flowers.

The intelligence produced at Bletchley was codenamed Ultra, and it gave the Allies unprecedented insight into enemy plans, troop movements, and strategic intentions. This information was passed to military commanders through highly secretive channels, often with such precision and speed that it altered the course of many important battles.

For instance, Bletchley intelligence was instrumental in the Battle of the Atlantic, helping Allied convoys avoid German U-boats. It also contributed to the success of the D-Day landings in June 1944 by misleading the Germans about the location of the Allied invasion.

In the shadows of war, Bletchley Park lit the path to victory



Alan Turing was a brilliant British mathematician, logician, and pioneer of computer science whose contributions during World War II were pivotal to the Allied victory. Born in 1912, Turing demonstrated an early aptitude for mathematics and pursued his studies at King's College, Cambridge, where he developed foundational ideas in the field of computer science.

Turing's most significant contribution emerged during his tenure at Bletchley Park, Britain's top-secret wartime code-breaking centre. Joining in 1939 at the commencement of the war, Turing played a central role in deciphering encrypted German communications, particularly those encoded by the Enigma machine - a sophisticated cipher device employed by the Nazi regime.

At Bletchley Park, Turing spearheaded the development of the Bombe, an electromechanical machine designed to expedite the decryption process of Enigma messages. His innovative approaches enabled the Allied forces to access vast volumes of German military communications, providing critical intelligence that significantly shortened the duration of the war by an estimated two years and saved countless lives.

Alan Turing : *The Codebreaker of Bletchley Park*

VE Day: Victory in Europe

On May 8, 1945, Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) was declared after Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allied forces. While much of the world celebrated in the streets, the men and women of Bletchley Park remained silent. Bound by the Official Secrets Act, they could not speak of their vital work—even to their own families.

Though unacknowledged at the time, many historians now agree that Bletchley Park's efforts may have shortened the war in Europe by as much as two years and saved millions of lives.

VJ Day: Victory in the Pacific

The war against Japan continued until Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) on August 15, 1945, following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Bletchley Park had also contributed to the Pacific theatre. Although its primary focus was European Axis communications, British and American code-breakers shared intelligence, including insights into Japanese codes.

Notably, Bletchley collaborated with the U.S. in breaking Japanese diplomatic and military ciphers - work that contributed to the success of Allied operations in the Pacific and to the final defeat of Imperial Japan.

Legacy and Recognition

Today, Bletchley Park stands not only as a museum but as a symbol of intellect, perseverance, and unheralded heroism. Its legacy extends far beyond wartime achievements. The methods and machines developed there gave birth to the digital age and laid the groundwork for modern computing and cybersecurity.

What makes Bletchley's story extraordinary is not just its success, but its secrecy. For decades, the veterans of Bletchley Park received no public recognition. It wasn't until the 1970s and beyond that the full scope of their work began to emerge. In recent years, renewed interest - spurred by books, documentaries, and films like *The Imitation Game* - has helped give these heroes their due.

As we reflect on VE Day and VJ Day, we remember not only the soldiers on the front lines but also the quiet warriors of Bletchley Park - whose brilliance behind closed doors helped bring the world back from the brink. Their story is a powerful reminder that sometimes, the most decisive battles are fought not with bullets or bombs, but with logic, patience, and an unwavering commitment to the truth.

Bombe Machine Model in Hut 11A, Courtesy of Bletchley Park Trust

Enigma Machine, Courtesy of Bletchley Park Trust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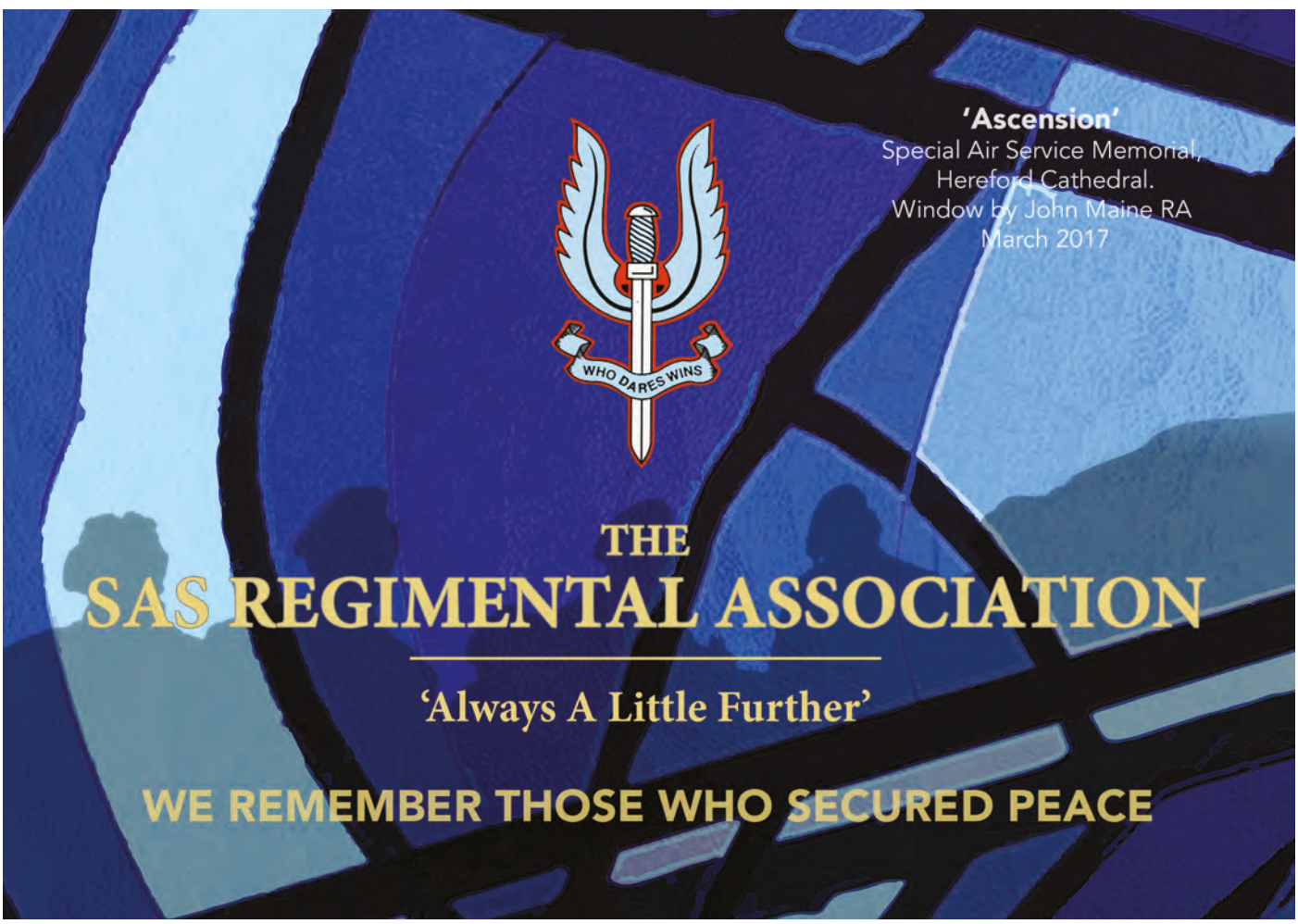
INTELLIGENCE CORPS
THE INTELLIGENCE CORPS - VE/VJ DAY 80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Window by John Maine RA
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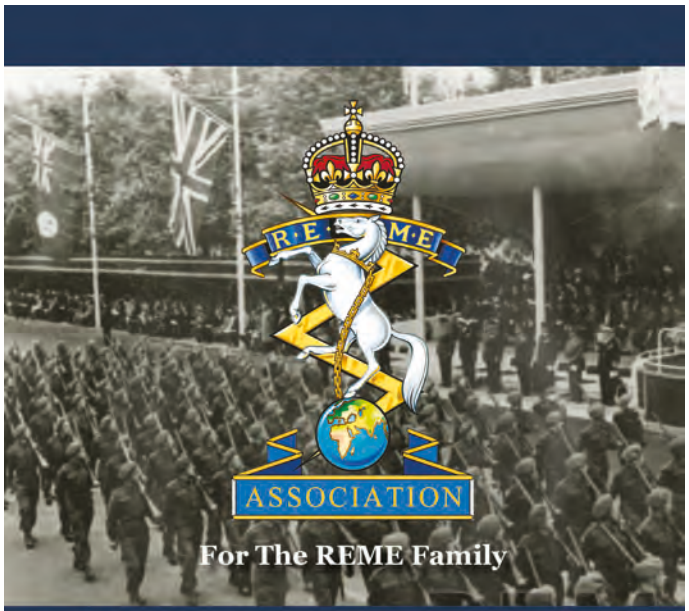
WE ARE PROUD TO REMEMBER
THOSE WHO SERVED



On VEVJ Day, we remember all of the servicemen & women who served so bravely during World War II.
Arte et Marte

THE REME CHARITY
FOR THE REME FAMILY

2nd Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment land at Queen Red Sector, Sword Beach, following a Duplex-Drive Sherman Tank.

NORMANDY LANDINGS

June 6th, 1944 : The beginning of the end of War in Europe

On a grey dawn that tasted of salt and fear, the course of history was irrevocably altered. June 6th, 1944, saw the largest amphibious invasion in history, the Normandy Landings, or D-Day, commence. This pivotal moment, a tapestry woven with extraordinary courage, meticulous planning, and devastating loss, remains a cornerstone in securing peace in Europe and ultimately bringing the Second World War to a grinding, yet triumphant, halt.

To understand the magnitude of D-Day, one must appreciate the dire circumstances facing Europe under Nazi occupation. From the Baltic to the Pyrenees, freedom had been extinguished, replaced by a brutal regime built on racial supremacy and expansionist ambition. Resistance fighters, though courageous, were often isolated and out-gunned. The Soviet Union, bearing the brunt of the Eastern Front, was desperate for relief. The fate of the continent, and indeed the world, hung precariously in the balance.

Then came D-Day. The sheer scale of the operation – over 156,000 troops, thousands of ships and aircraft – was a testament to Allied resolve. Soldiers from America, Britain, Canada, and other nations, facing withering fire on the beaches of Normandy, displayed a bravery that transcends mere words. They stormed fortified positions, endured horrific casualties, and clawed their way inland, inch by agonizing inch. The price paid in blood was staggering, but the foothold gained proved decisive.

D-Day was more than just a military victory; it was a strategic turning point. The opening of the Western Front forced Germany to fight a two-front war, stretching its resources and manpower to the breaking point. It provided the Allies with a crucial supply line and a platform from which to launch the liberation of Western Europe. The months that followed saw the steady advance of Allied forces, pushing the Wehrmacht back across France, Belgium, and beyond.

But D-Day's significance extends beyond military strategy. It was a powerful symbol of hope, a beacon illuminating the darkness that had enveloped Europe. For the occupied nations, the sight of Allied soldiers signified the promise of liberation, the prospect of returning to normalcy, and the re-establishment of democratic principles. It was a moment of profound inspiration that fuelled resistance movements and strengthened the will to fight for freedom.

Furthermore, D-Day serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of conflict. The cemeteries of Normandy stand as silent witnesses to the immense sacrifice made by those who fought for our freedom. They are a solemn testament to the horrors of war and a powerful argument for the enduring importance of peace.

In a world facing new and complex challenges, the lessons of D-Day remain profoundly relevant. We must remember the courage, the sacrifice, and the unwavering determination of those who fought on those beaches. We must continue to uphold the values they defended – freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

D-Day was not the end of the war, but it was the beginning of the end. It was the longest day, but it ushered in the dawn of liberation. Let us not only remember the fallen, but also reaffirm our commitment to building a more peaceful and just world – a world worthy of the sacrifice they made on the shores of Normandy. The legacy of D-Day demands nothing less.

D-Day veterans return to Normandy to mark 81st anniversary

A remembrance service was held at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer, which was attended by the ever-dwindling number of surviving veterans in their late 90s and older, remembering the thousands who died that day.

D-Day veteran and ambassador for the British Normandy Memorial, Ken Hay, 99, and Royal Navy D-Day veteran Henry Rice, 99, laid wreaths at the memorial. Ken was captured on the night of July 7-8 and was taken to Zabrze in Poland where he worked as a prisoner of war in a coal mine. As the Russians approached, the prisoners were taken to a new location, approximately 1,000 miles away, during which many of them died.
Eventually they were liberated by American troops and Mr Hay returned to the UK via Reims, arriving on May 4.

Mr Hay said: "Even though the 80th anniversary has passed, we veterans still feel it is our duty to come back here and remember all our friends who never came home. We get applauded, even though they are the ones who gave it all. Sharing my stories with children in the UK and France is something I am very passionate about. We are the age of their great-grandparents - we experienced it, understand it and know that it should never happen again."

Mervyn Kersh was 19 on D-Day. Eight decades on, now 100 years old, his memories of being sent ashore on Gold Beach and towards German gunfire are as vivid as ever.

"In the early hours of the morning, I could see the coastline coming - it suddenly dawned on me what was happening."

(Left to right) Royal Navy D-Day veteran John Dennett, D-Day veteran and ambassador for the British Normandy Memorial Ken Hay, Royal Navy D-Day veteran Henry Rice, Royal Marines D-Day veteran Jim Grant, Royal Navy D-Day veteran Ken Benbow, Royal Navy veteran George Boothby, D-Day Army veteran Richard Brock, ATS veteran Marjorie Hanson and RAF veteran Gilbert Clarke during a wreath-laying ceremony at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer, France.

Veterans in attendance at the wreath laying ceremony at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer, France included:

- **Royal Navy D-Day veteran John Dennett,**
- **D-Day veteran and Ambassador for the British Normandy Memorial Ken Hay,**
- **Royal Navy D-Day veteran Henry Rice,**
- **Royal Marines D-Day veteran Jim Grant,**
- **Royal Navy D-Day veteran Ken Benbow,**
- **Royal Navy Veteran George Boothby,**
- **D-Day army veteran Richard Brock,**
- **ATS veteran Marjorie Hanson and RAF veteran Gilbert Clarke.**

Defence Secretary John Healey lay a wreath during the ceremony and was seen shaking hands with veteran Gilbert Clarke aged 99. He said: "We forever owe an enormous debt to the British and Allied forces who landed in Normandy 81 years ago today, determined to defeat Nazi tyranny and restore peace to western Europe. As we reset the nation's contract with our armed forces, we will continue to remember all those who served to defend our values."

Tens of thousands of onlookers attended the commemorations, which included parachute jumps, remembrance ceremonies, parades, and historical re-enactments.

Many were there to cheer the ever-dwindling number of surviving veterans in their late 90s and older. All will remember the thousands who died.

British veterans also attended a service on Thursday in Coleville-Montgomery and visited nearby Sword Beach, where thousands of soldiers landed eight decades ago.

D-Day veteran and ambassador for the British Normandy Memorial, Ken Hay, 99, at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer, France

THE SPIRIT OF NORMANDY

A CHARITABLE TRUST TO PERPETUATE THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT TO PRESERVE FREEDOM

Objectives

Benevolence

To provide financial assistance for veterans of the three Services and their dependents who are in need.

The Trust became the "charity arm" of the Normandy Veterans Association, primarily for assistance to WWII veterans especially those who served in Normandy. Since the closure of the Association in 2014 the Trust has continued with welfare assistance under its own remit.

Requests for assistance

Such requests should be channelled through SSAFA Forces Help which can be contacted at;

SSAFA Forces Help
4 St Dunstan's Hill
London EC3R 8AD

Tel: 0800 731 4880
Website: www.ssafa.org.uk

Information on local branches and how to proceed is available at these sites. In turn SSAFA will assess the individual case and channel the details to the appropriate charities including The Spirit of Normandy Trust.

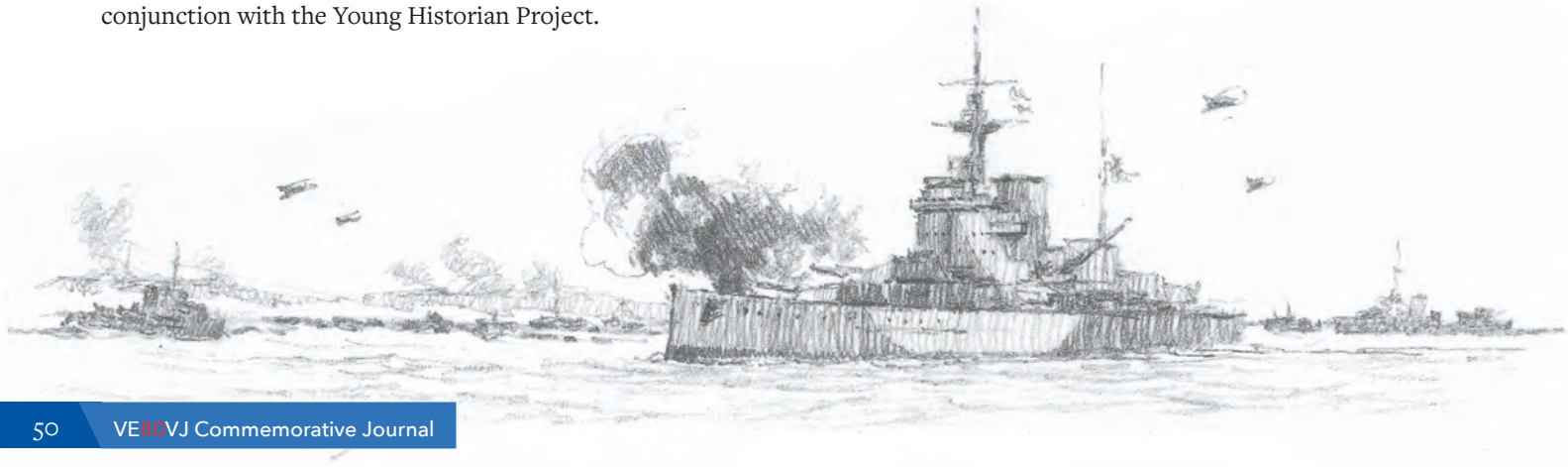
Education

To increase the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the general public concerning the events leading up to and culminating in the Normandy Landings and their historical significance.

Working in close liaison with the Young Historian Project, the Trust awards annual prizes for essays submitted by schools throughout the country.

These prizes are for groups and individual pupils in three categories at Primary, Key Stage 3 and Senior levels.
The veterans are especially keen that young people should know what the War meant to Servicemen and their families.

There are a number of veterans who remain fit and well and who are happy to visit local schools by invitation to talk to children and answer their questions. This "living documentary" has been shown to inspire the children and to ignite their imagination. This has been most apparent in the content of many of the essays written in response to the Trust's essay competition run in conjunction with the Young Historian Project.



Honouring those who secured peace
80th Anniversary VE/VJ Day

Known as the C-47 Skytrain in US service and 'Dakota' by the RAF, these venerable and much loved aircraft played a vital role transporting paratroopers of the British 6th Airborne Division as part of the airborne assault on D-Day. Today, a fleet of eight C-17 aircraft provide the backbone of the UK's strategic airlift and mobility capability, ably complemented by the CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

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Dragon™ MK8 is a thermite lance specifically designed to destroy thin skinned steel (up to 13mm) and plastic cased ordnance. This stand-off solution offers an effective method of destroying ordnance and specifically those that are classed as "no touch" items. The Dragon thermite lance is 'a pre-loaded turnkey solution' and can be imported into regions where access to explosives and accessories are prohibited.

BHD8 is a turnkey self contained deflagration system consisting of a deflagration sleeve, stand and initiator that can be used to neutralise landmines and other thin cased unexploded ordnance (4mm steel maximum).

BHD8 is a safe product that is not classified as an explosive therefore simple to transport, handle and store.

Thermal Shock Induced Deflagrator (TSID) blocks are designed to neutralise High Explosive (HE) filled munitions rapidly with reduced risk of detonation as a Low Order Technique. TSID minimises fragmentation, blast over-pressure and acoustic pollution by initiating rapid combustion of the munitions filling by deflagration through thermal shock.

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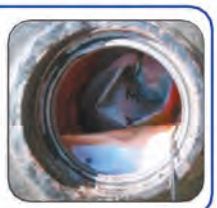

Thermal Destructor Type A (TD-A) is a modified, high temperature Thermite mix specifically designed to rapidly burn through thin sheet metal casings and ignite High Explosive (HE) fillings or other energetic contents. By burning in fuze pockets, TD-A allows burning of munitions without the need to actively cut through casings to expose the explosive.

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WITHDRAWING THROUGH DUNKIRK JUNE 1940
RETURNING TO NORMANDY TO ASSAULT KING BEACH
LA RIVIERE AT H HOUR ON D DAY 6TH JUNE 1944 TO LIBERATE CREULLY LATER THAT DAY
AND IN DUE COURSE TO ASSIST IN BRINGING THE FIGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION

If you would like to help support the RDG Association or get in touch
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PEGASUS LINE MAN

Corporal Thomas Waters MM
Royal Corps of Signals

For his actions during the airborne operations in the Ranville area on 6th June 1944 and the following day, Cpl Waters was presented with the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry, coolness under enemy fire and devotion to duty.

On 6th June 1944, Cpl Waters volunteered to bring in a wounded comrade from an exposed position in the face of accurate enemy sniping which had already caused casualties. Without thought for his own safety, he went forward and brought in the wounded man then continued his duty of laying a signal line along an exposed route under constant enemy sniping and small arms fire.

When this line was cut by enemy fire Cpl Waters again went out on several occasions under fire and in full view of the enemy to repair it.

Through his gallantry and with a complete disregard for his own safety, Cpl Waters maintained communications between the Brigade headquarters and the forward troops. A few months later, whilst training for Operation Market Garden, Cpl Waters was severely injured in the head by a grenade fragment which resulted in him losing an eye and gaining a metal plate, which led to a medical discharge in 1945.

After the war he became a postman, but tragically he was killed by a car in 1955 whilst carrying out his postal round. He was just 40 years old.

DECORATIONS

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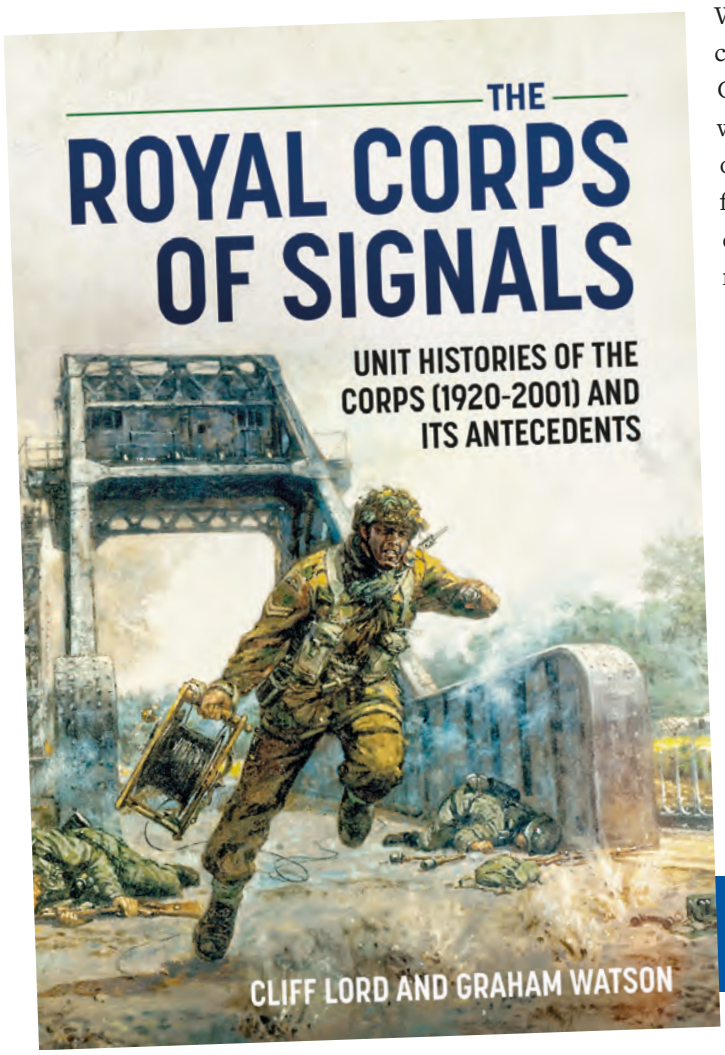
DEFENCE MEDAL

WAR MEDAL



THE ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS
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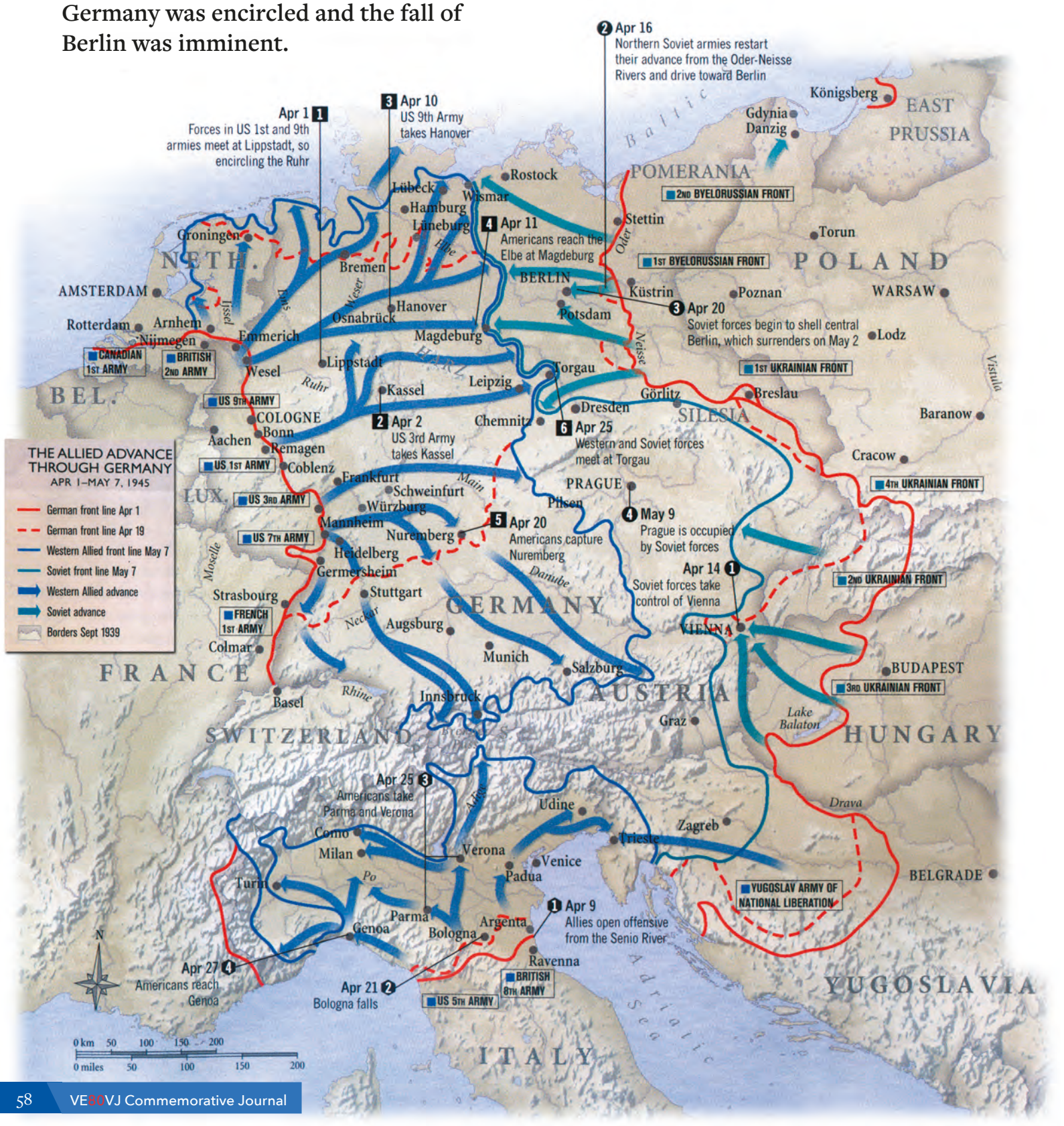
EUROPE... THE FINAL PUSH

April 1st to May 11th, 1945

In the last few weeks of the war, dramatic events on every front were witnessed as Germany was encircled and the fall of Berlin was imminent.



APRIL 1st

US 1st & 9th Armies complete encirclement of German troops in the Ruhr.

APRIL 2nd

Soviet forces reach border between Hungary & Austria.

APRIL 9th

Allies open offensive in Northern Italy. Codenamed Operation Grapeshot.

APRIL 10th

Königsberg surrenders to Soviet forces after a three-day assault made their position untenable.

APRIL 11th

US 9th Army takes Hannover, Germany's 10th largest city.

APRIL 12th

Americans reach the Elbe at Magdeburg. US President Roosevelt dies.

APRIL 15th

Canadian forces capture Arnhem. Allied troops liberate Belsen.

APRIL 18th

Ruhr pocket captured. 317,000 German troops were taken prisoner along with 24 generals.

APRIL 20th

Americans capture Nuremberg, a symbol of the Nazi regime, fell after intense urban combat.

APRIL 25th

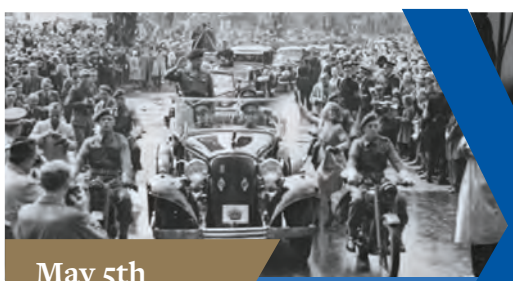
Allied forces meet the Soviets at Torgau on the Elbe.

APRIL 30th

Hitler commits suicide after being holed up in a bunker under his headquarters in Berlin.

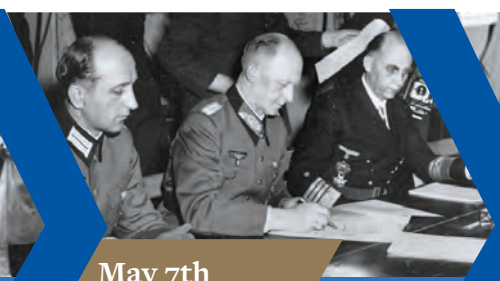
May 2nd

Berlin surrenders to the Soviets. The city is left a ruin.



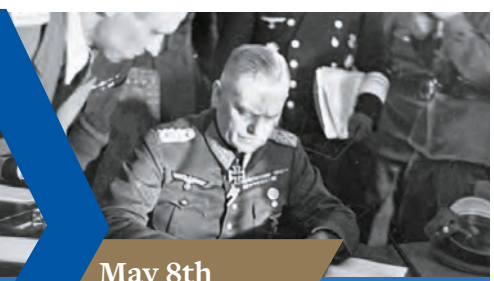
May 5th

German forces in north-west Germany, Netherlands and Denmark surrenders.



May 7th

In Reims General Jodl signs German surrender, but fighting continues in Czechoslovakia.



May 8th

In Berlin, just after midnight, Field Marshal Keitel signs unconditional German surrender.

BLIND VETERANS UK

The importance of capturing the memories of our Greatest Generation

By Claire Rowcliffe, Director of Engagement, Blind Veterans UK

80 years' ago, up and down the country revellers filled the pubs and danced in the streets. Yet, for many, the joy was tinged with sorrow – loved ones were gone, and friendships would soon be lost.

Any veteran serving that day will now be in their late 90s and many are over 100. Taking the time to recognise their service and sacrifice for all our freedoms is arguably more important than ever before. Realistically, this will be the last opportunity for us, as a nation, to give a collective thank you to our Greatest Generation.

As we mark 80 years since the end of the Second World War, Blind Veterans UK has been proud to capture and share extraordinary first-hand accounts from our veterans who were there. From the overwhelming relief to the highs and lows that unfolded, each one has a powerful story to tell.

We have also worked with renowned illustrator, Martin Impey, best known for

providing the illustrations for War Horse, to bring our VE and VJ Day veterans' memories to life.

The illustrations depict the individual memories of 14 of our blind veterans, transporting them back to 80 years ago, and providing a window into what they experienced.

All of these stories and illustrations can all be seen at **blindveterans.org.uk/victory80.**

Alongside each illustration, you can read a detailed image description to find out more about the veteran's story.

You can also visit that page to help Blind Veterans UK support these brave veterans who are now facing a new battle against sight loss by donating to the charity's 'After the Darkness' campaign.

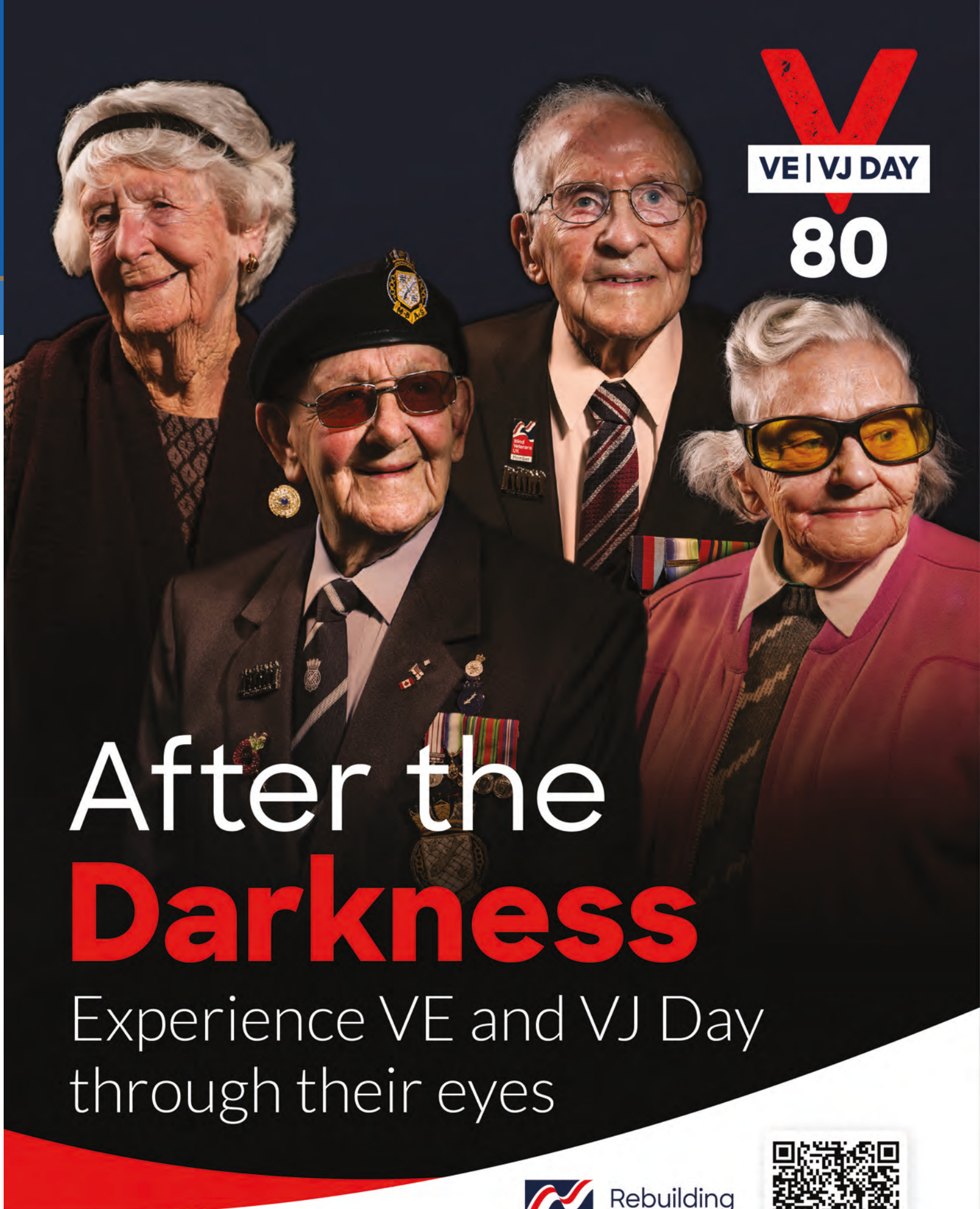
Our charity, previously known as St Dunstan's, was here for hundreds of veterans who lost their sight in the Second World War. Today, all the WWII Veterans we support lost their sight much later in life due to age-related conditions such as macular degeneration.

Many of these veterans describe losing their sight, at any age, as a terrifying experience. As they find themselves losing their independence, they can often feel isolated, helpless and unable to cope.

Blind Veterans UK rebuilds lives. We fight for ex-Servicemen and women of every generation through our specialist rehabilitation and support. For life.

We know there are veterans out there who are struggling with their sight and either don't know about us or don't believe they are entitled to our support.

If you, or anyone you know, has served our country and are now struggling with your sight then please get in touch with us today by visiting **blindveterans.org.uk.**



After the Darkness

Experience VE and VJ Day through their eyes

Blind Veterans UK

Rebuilding lives after sight loss

blindveterans.org.uk/victory80

Registered Charity No. 216227 (England & Wales) and SCO39411 (Scotland) © Photography by Richard Cannon

LÜNEBURG HEATH

German Forces in Western Europe Surrender, 4th May 1945

Doenitz sends envoys to Montgomery's HQ at Lüneburg Heath to arrange for the surrender of Holland, Denmark and north Germany. This surrender will be effective at 0800 on May 5. In a tent on the desolate Lüneburg Heath, three generals and two admirals this evening put their signatures to the surrender of all German armed forces in north-west Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Lüneburg had been captured by the British forces on 18 April 1945 with Montgomery establishing his headquarters at a villa in the village of Häcklingen. A German delegation arrived at his tactical headquarters on the Timeloberg hill by car on 3 May, having been sent by Großadmiral Karl Dönitz who had been nominated President and Supreme Commander of the German armed forces by Adolf Hitler in his last will and testament on 29 April.

Dönitz was aware of the allied occupation zones intended for Germany from a plan that had fallen into German hands. He therefore hoped that protracted partial and local surrender negotiations might buy time for troops and refugees in the east to seek refuge from the Red Army, whilst holding open a pocket to provide sanctuary on the west bank of the River Elbe.

Dönitz did not think it appropriate to negotiate personally with a field marshal as he had become the head of state following the death of Adolf Hitler. He therefore sent the delegation headed by the new Commander-in-Chief of the German navy Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg.

Montgomery refused an initial offer to surrender Army Group Vistula which was being cut off to the east by the Red Army and demanded the unconditional surrender of all forces on his northern and western flanks. The Germans stated that they did not have the authority to accept Montgomery's terms. However they agreed to return to their headquarters to obtain permission from Großadmiral Dönitz.

The German officers returned the next day at 18:00 with an additional delegate, (Colonel Fritz Poleck) representing the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, (the German armed forces high command). Von Friedeburg was ushered into Montgomery's command caravan for confirmation that they were ready to sign. For the surrender ceremony Montgomery sat at the head of a table with an army blanket draped over it and two BBC microphones in front of him; he called on each delegate in turn to sign the instrument of surrender document at 18.30.

The surrender ceremony was filmed by the British Pathé News and recorded for broadcast on radio by the BBC with a commentary by the Australian war correspondent Chester Wilmot. The intimate detail of document translation and conversation interpretation was supervised by one of Montgomery's senior intelligence officers Colonel James Oliver Ewart.

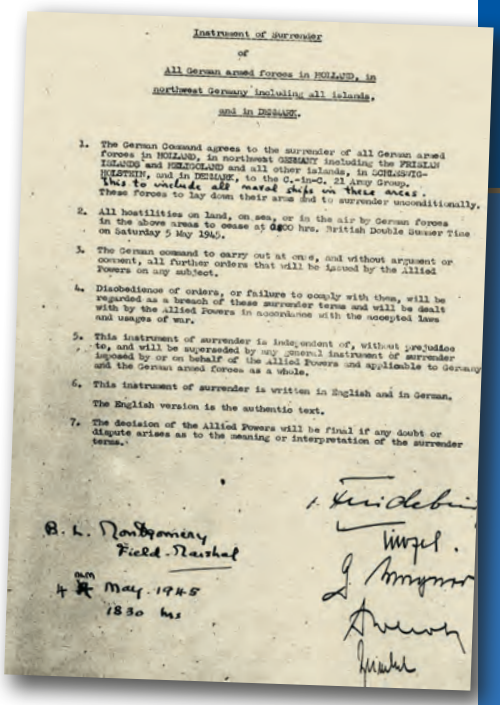
In a report reprinted in The New York Times, CBS war correspondent Bill Downs described the surrender negotiations:

After lunch, Field Marshal Montgomery called the Germans back for further consultation, and there he delivered his ultimatum ...He told the Germans:

"You must understand three things: Firstly, you must surrender to me unconditionally all the German forces in Holland, Friesen and the Frisian Islands and Heligoland and all other islands in Schleswig-Holstein and in Denmark. Secondly, when you have done that, I am prepared to discuss with you the implications of your surrender: how we will dispose of those surrendered troops, how we will occupy the surrendered territory, how we will deal with the civilians, and so forth. And my third point: If you do not agree to Point 1, the surrender, then I will go on with the war and I will be delighted to do so." Monty added, as an after-thought, *"All your soldiers and civilians may be killed."*

Admiral von Friedeburg went on to sign the German Instrument of Surrender preparatory to the ending World War II in Europe on 7 May at Reims in France and

> *"Firstly, you must surrender to me unconditionally all German Forces"*



Instrument of Surrender
of
All German armed forces in HOLLAND, in northwest Germany including all islands,
and in DENMARK.

1. The German Command agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in HOLLAND, in northwest GERMANY including the FRISIAN ISLANDS and HELIGOLAND and all other islands, in SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, and in DENMARK, to the C.-in-C. 21 Army Group. This to include all naval ships in these areas. These Forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.
2. All hostilities on land, on sea, or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800 hrs. British Double Summer Time on Saturday 5 May 1945.
3. The German command to carry out at once, and without argument or comment, all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.
4. Disobedience of orders, or failure to comply with them, will be regarded as a breach of these surrender terms and will be dealt with by the Allied Powers in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war.
5. This instrument of surrender is independent of, without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender imposed by or on behalf of the Allied Powers and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole.
6. This instrument of surrender is written in English and in German. The English version is the authentic text.
7. The decision of the Allied Powers will be final if any doubt or dispute arises as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.

B. L. Montgomery
Field-Marshal
4 May 1945
1830 hrs

signed again on 8 May with the Supreme High Command of the Red Army, French and US representatives in Berlin. Both Admiral von Friedeburg and General Kinzel committed suicide on 23 May 1945.

After the war a monument was erected by the British on what they now called Victory Hill. The monument was dismantled in 1958 and rebuilt at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Today the spot lies in an out-of-bounds military area and is not accessible to the public. In 1995 another monument was erected on the edge of the Timeloberg, outside the restricted area. The last survivor of the negotiations was one of Montgomery's interpreters Derek Knee who died aged 91 in 2014.

Field Marshal Montgomery receives German Admiral Von Friedeburg and other members of the surrender delegation at 21st Army Group Headquarters near Lüneburg, 3 May 1945. Copyright: © IWM (BU 5145)

INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

1. The German Command agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in Holland, in northwest Germany including the Frisian Islands and Heligoland and all other islands. In Schleswig-Holstein and in Denmark, to the Commander in Chief, 21 Army Group. This is to include all naval ships in the areas. These forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.

2. All hostilities on land, on sea, or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800hrs. British Double Summer Time on Saturday 5 May 1945.

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6. This instrument of surrender is written in English and in German. [The] English version is the authentic text.

7. The decision of the Allied Powers will be final if any doubt or dispute arises as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.

SIGNATORIES

United Kingdom
Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery – as commander of the 21st Army Group

Germany
Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg – as German Commander-in-Chief of the Navy (Kriegsmarine).

General Eberhard Kinzel – as chief of staff of the northwest German army (Heer).

Rear Admiral Gerhard Wagner – as head of the operational department of the Kriegsmarine staff.

Colonel Fritz Poleck – Oberkommando der Wehrmacht representative (Wehrmacht).

Major Hans Jochen Freidel – staff officer to General Kinzel (Heer).

THE FALL OF BERLIN

Unconditional surrender : 2nd of May 1945

To Germany's opponents, Berlin was the centre of Prussian, Imperial, and Nazi militarism from which Hitler had directed his drive for European and world hegemony; hence, its capture would deal a decisive blow to the Germans' passion for national aggrandizement. Hitler had proposed some day to make Berlin the architectural symbol of Germany, but preferring his field headquarters and his retreat in *Berchtesgaden*, he had spent little time there during the war. On the 15th of January 1945, he returned from his Western Front headquarters to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, where bombing soon forced him to move into an underground bunker.

Soviet Marshal Zhukov's First Belorussian front (army group) and Marshal Konev's First Ukrainian front, completed the initial phase of an offensive during the battle for Germany which had begun three weeks earlier, close to the River Oder in early February. From his position at Küstrin, on the Oder 57 km. (35 miles) east of Berlin, Zhukov could in all likelihood have overrun Berlin and gone on to the River Elbe and beyond in another three weeks, but Stalin delayed the second phase.

Lacking Troops and Material

On the city's direct approaches, Hitler had only the shattered remnants of Third Panzer and Ninth Armies under a newly formed headquarters, Army Group Vistula, and he lacked the troops and materials to exploit fully the time Stalin allowed him. An advance across the Oder to the River Neisse which Konev made against the Fourth Panzer Army in February also created a threat to Berlin from the south.

In March Hitler ordered that regardless of what happened at the front, the city would be defended 'to the last man and the last shot' on concentric rings. The outermost lay about 32km (20 miles) from the city centre, the next 16km further in, then one following the S-Bahn, or suburban railway. The inner-most, designated 'Z' for *Zitadelle* (citadel), embraced the government district and the *Führerbunker*.

On 31 March, alarmed at the progress the Americans and British were making east of the Rhine, Stalin ordered Zhukov and Konev to regroup and resume the offensive into Germany. Zhukov would have the honour of taking Berlin, Konev would support him on the left and strike towards Dresden, and Marshal Rokossovsky's Second Belorussian front would deploy on the lower Oder to give support on the right. Together, the three fronts had 2.5 million troops, 6,250 armoured vehicles, and 7,500 aircraft.

Assault on Seelow Heights

Zhukov, expecting to make a frontal sweep to and over Berlin, mounted an assault against the Seelow Heights west of the Oder before dawn on 16 April. He had deployed batteries of searchlights to blind the Germans and illuminate their positions, but in the ensuing smoke and glare, his own attack collapsed.

The next day, six armies, two of them tank armies, failed again. On 18 April, after the armies had made two fairly deep dents in the line but no

Ruins of the Reichstag in Berlin after surrender

breakthrough, Stalin ordered Zhukov to shift weight to the right and go around Berlin to the north.

Konev, who had crossed the Neisse on 16 April, was ordered to aim his two tank armies at and around Berlin from the south; and Rokossovsky would bear south to help Zhukov complete the encirclement.

Hitler imagining he might yet win the battle, ordered the Ninth Army to stand fast on the Oder - and thereby eased the way to Berlin for Konev.

On 20 April, Konev's tanks reached Jüterbog, the German Army's largest ammunition depot and were approaching Zossen, its communications centre. Hitler gave those of his entourage who came to congratulate him on his birthday that day permission to leave Berlin before all the roads were closed. He, he said, would see the battle through where he was.

Three of Zhukov's armies reached the Berlin outer defensive ring on 21 April, and his and Konev's armour closed the encirclement on 25 April.

Recently enlisted old men and boys

Hitler then set about trying to organise a relief, but his largest force, the Ninth Army, was itself encircled and being destroyed and Wenck's Twelfth Army approaching from the west, in an attempt to break through to the capital, was far too weak to help. Berlin was being defended by regular troops unlucky enough to have been pushed back into the city and by recently enlisted old men and boys.

View over the ruins of East Berlin with the ruins of the Klosterkirche

Marshal Georgy Zhukov
Commander, 1st Belorussian Front

Zhukov was chosen by Stalin to personally accept the German Instrument of Surrender in Berlin. He also attended the Potsdam Conference with other Allied representatives.

Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Konev
Commander, 1st Ukranian Front

Konev's forces entered the city first, but Stalin gave Zhukov the honor of capturing Berlin and hoisting the Soviet flag over the Reichstag.

Helmuth Otto Ludwig Weidling
Commander, Berlin Defence Area

Weidling organised the defences into eight sectors designated "A" through to "H". Each sector was commanded by a colonel or a general, but most of the colonels and generals had no combat experience.

On the 29th of April the city commandant, Lieutenant General Karl Weidling, reported that ammunition would probably run out the next day. Early on the 30th of April, the chief of the Armed Forces High Command, Field Marshal Keitel, reported from outside the pocket that relief was not progressing at any point.

That afternoon, while Soviet troops were storming The Reichstag building, 400 metres away, Hitler killed himself. During an impromptu cease fire the next day, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Krebs, tried unsuccessfully to bargain for a less than conditional surrender. On the 2nd of May Lieutenant General Weidling surrendered the city.

From Devastation to Rebirth

At the end of World War II, Berlin lay in ruins. The Battle of Berlin had transformed the once-thriving city into a devastated landscape, its infrastructure crippled and its streets choked with rubble.

The transport networks - roads and railways - were either destroyed or obstructed, while essential services like electricity and water were severely disrupted.

Landmarks that had symbolized Berlin's historical and cultural heritage, such as the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag, bore the scars of war, reminders of the relentless conflict that had consumed the city. Residential areas and commercial districts, once bustling with life, were now bleak wastelands of debris - each shattered building a testament to the immense human and material losses suffered. Yet, the devastation extended beyond the physical realm.

Berlin's social fabric had been torn apart. Its population, once in the millions, struggled with displacement, food shortages, and a dire lack of medical supplies. Survival was a daily challenge.

The Path to Reconstruction

Rebuilding Berlin seemed an insurmountable task. However, the determination of its citizens proved stronger than the adversity they faced. The first step was the monumental effort to clear the rubble - a task shouldered largely by the ***Trümmerfrauen***, or "rubble women." With so many men lost to war, these women took on the laborious work of clearing the wreckage, paving the way for recovery. The city's reconstruction was further complicated by political divisions, as Berlin was split into East and West. Despite this, both sides made remarkable progress.

West Berlin, supported by U.S. financial aid through the Marshall Plan, focused on restoring historic buildings and churches, such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, while initiating new housing and infrastructure projects. East Berlin, under Soviet control, prioritized social housing and public buildings, alongside efforts to restore key cultural sites like Museum Island.

A City Reborn

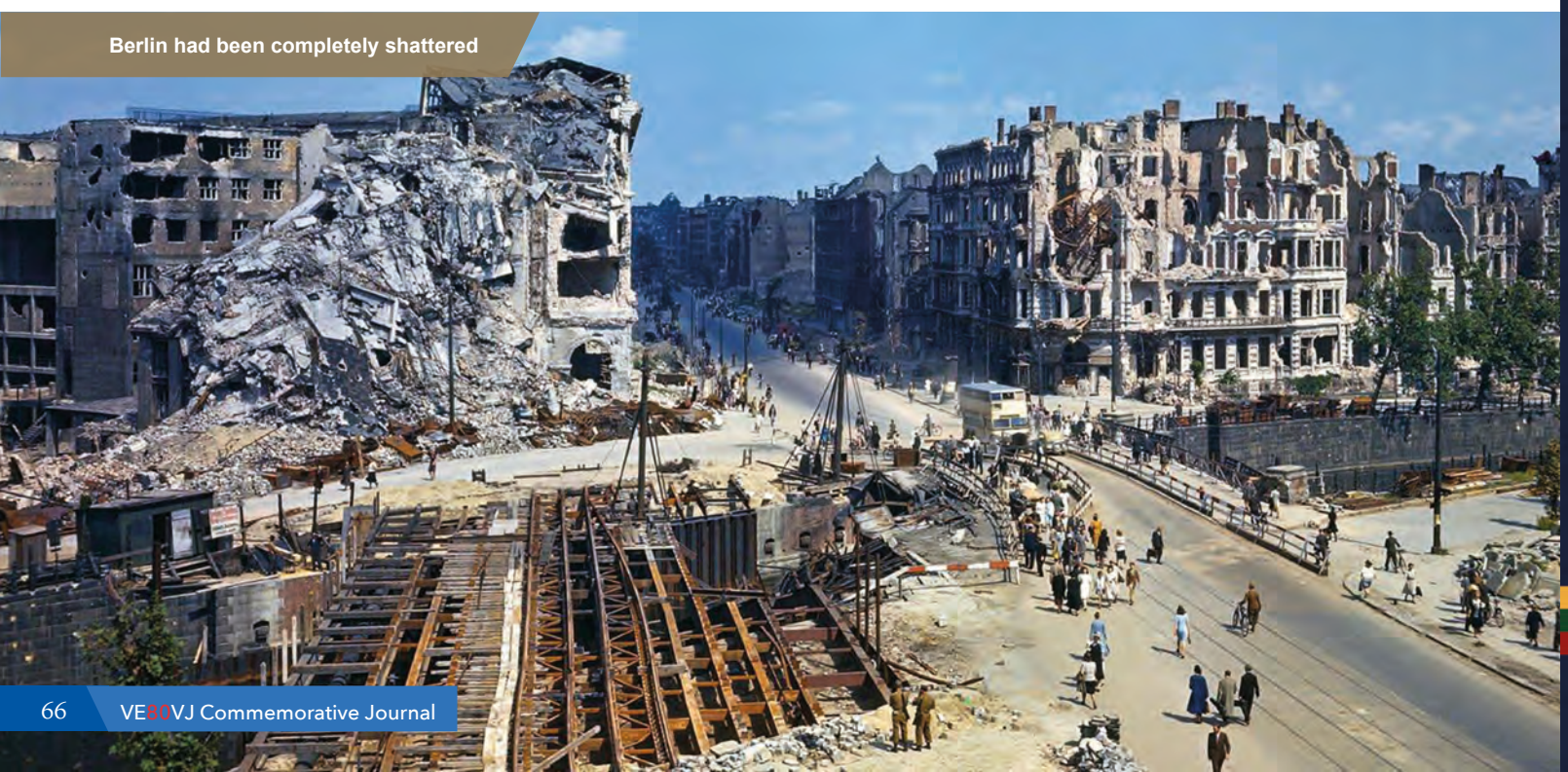
Berlin bore the scars of war for years to come, it emerged as a city of resilience and renewal. Amid the reconstructed streets and restored landmarks, hope flourished - a testament to the unbreakable spirit of the Berliners.

Berlin's transformation from devastation to rebirth is a powerful narrative of determination and survival. As we reflect on this period, we recognize the enduring lessons it offers: the strength of human perseverance and the ability to rise from even the darkest of times.

Berlin's red city hall showing severe bomb damage

Destroyed street in Berlin with a wrecked anti-aircraft gun

Berlin had been completely shattered



DUKE OF LANCASTER'S REGIMENT

'Difficulties be Damned'

The King's Regiment (Liverpool)

5th Bn - Sword Beach
8th Bn - Juno Beach

The Manchester Regiment

1st Bn - landed 27th June

The East Lancashire Regiment

1st Bn - Juno Beach

The South Lancashire Regiment

1st Bn - Sword Beach
13 Para Bn - Operation Tonga
(Airborne Landings)

The Regiment is proud to remember and pay tribute, on this 80th Anniversary VE/VJ Day, to our antecendents who served and secured peace

A NATION'S TRIBUTE TO TRIUMPH AND SACRIFICE

Britain commemorates the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe

Eighty years have passed since Victory in Europe Day - an unforgettable moment when the world exhaled and the horrors of war in Europe came to an end. On 8 May 1945, joy, relief, and gratitude erupted across Britain as people flooded the streets, dancing, cheering, and embracing a new-found peace. In 2025, the country once again stood together, not just to commemorate a historic victory but to reaffirm the lessons of courage and resilience that shaped the nation during its darkest hours.

From the grandeur of military parades in London to the intimate tea parties hosted in gardens and community halls, the four-day celebration was a tribute to the past, a reflection on sacrifice, and a reminder of the unity that carried Britain through nearly six years of war.

Monday, 5 May: The Procession and Flypast - A Nation on Parade

The commemorations began with a powerful display of tradition, strength, and remembrance.

In the heart of London, outside Parliament Square, D-Day veteran Alan Kennett stood before the crowd and formally began the military procession - a grand spectacle featuring 1,300 servicemen and women from the UK Armed Forces, uniformed services, and young cadets.

With immaculate precision, the march began. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment and The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery led the way, their movements steeped in centuries-old tradition.

As they passed Whitehall and the Cenotaph, draped in a Union Jack flag - the weight of history was palpable.

Actor Timothy Spall, known for his stirring performances, recited Winston Churchill's legendary VE Day speech.

King Charles III speaks to second world war veteran Joe Mines at a tea party in Buckingham Palace.

His voice carried through the square, repeating Churchill's words that had once filled the airwaves on the original VE Day:

"My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole."

At Buckingham Palace, the Royal Family stood in solemn witness to the procession. The King and Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales with their children, and the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, looked on as the march made its way past the Queen Victoria Memorial.

Then, the moment of awe, the skies roared as a fleet of military aircraft soared over London. And finally, the pièce de résistance: the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows streaked across the sky,

Flags of Commonwealth nations are carried by members of the armed forces during a military procession for the 80th anniversary of VE Day, in central London.

The military flypast passes over the Mall and Buckingham Palace.

Yeoman Sergeant Dan Benson poses for a photograph among a new display of ceramic poppies, called The Tower Remembers.

painting it in red, white, and blue. Celebrations spilled into the streets.

The nation came alive with street parties, barbecues, music festivals, and even an afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the King and Queen for veterans. Across the country, tea parties brought generations together, with veterans swapping wartime stories over finger sandwiches, soup, and Scotch eggs, while bands played the anthems that had once rallied a nation in crisis.

Tuesday, 6 May: A Sea of Red - The Tower of London's Poppy Installation

On the second day, an extraordinary tribute returned to one of Britain's most iconic landmarks.

The Tower of London, a fortress that has stood witness to history for nearly a thousand years, unveiled a new installation of 30,000 ceramic poppies.

Originally crafted in 2014 for the renowned "Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red" exhibit, the poppies - on loan from the Imperial War Museum - now served as a lasting tribute to those who fought and fell during the Second World War.

Second world war veteran, Colin Deverell, Victoria Starmer, UK prime minister Keir Starmer, and veteran Ruth Brook Klauber, at a street party on Downing Street to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The Queen herself visited the Tower to witness the breathtaking display.

While a portion of the installation remained free for public viewing, the full immersive experience within the Tower grounds was designed to evoke reflection - a chance to pause and remember.

As evening fell, the country was bathed in a soft glow as major landmarks, including Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, Edinburgh Castle, and Blackpool Tower, were illuminated, casting a warm remembrance over the night sky.

Wednesday, 7 May: Music and Memory - A Concert in Westminster Hall

In Westminster Hall, within the Palace of Westminster, the anniversary concert brought people together through the universal language of music.

The Parliament Choir performed sweeping renditions of classic wartime compositions, with melodies stretching

across Europe and America, recalling the shared hope and perseverance of the Allied nations.

It was a night of reflection and celebration, an evening where each note seemed to carry the memories of a generation.

Thursday, 8 May: A Moment of Silence, A Call for Peace

The official anniversary of VE Day dawned with solemnity and reverence. In Westminster Abbey, a grand service was held, attended by veterans, politicians, charities, and the Royal Family, all gathered to honour the moment that reshaped history.

At midday, the nation observed a two-minute silence. Across government buildings, offices, and homes, people paused - allowing the weight of the past to settle in. It was a moment of quiet, of remembrance, of gratitude.

Later in the day, the Royal British Legion hosted an intimate tea party at the National Memorial Arboretum, welcoming 46 veterans, among them Roy and Kathleen Lawrence, a remarkable couple believed to be among Britain's oldest living war veterans.

Hundreds of UK landmarks were lit up to mark the anniversary including the iconic Blackpool Tower which was lit up in red, white and blue.

Maj Gen James Bowder, head of the Household Division, leads a military march along Whitehall during the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The Royal Family on Buckingham Palace balcony

Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, 80 pipers and drummers paraded through Enniskillen, filling the air with a powerful, stirring tribute to the occasion.

A Fiery Finale: Beacons and the King's Address

As night fell, the commemorations reached their breathtaking conclusion.

Across the UK, 2,500 beacons flickered into life - a living tribute stretching across cities, towns, and quiet countryside villages.

On the River Thames, beneath the towering presence of London's Tower Bridge, flames danced across the water. Beacons burned in Folkestone, Dorset, Lancashire, and the Isle of Wight, each one igniting a shared remembrance across generations.

At Horse Guards Parade, a final concert entertained 12,000 spectators - with dance, orchestral masterpieces, and comedic sketches capturing the essence of Britain's wartime resilience.

And at precisely 9pm, in perfect symmetry with history, King Charles III addressed the nation - echoing the solemn words of his grandfather, King George VI, from eight decades before.

"Let us rededicate ourselves to the cause of freedom, to the prevention of conflict, and to the lasting peace that so many gave their lives to secure."

His words were carried across the country, as families gathered, glasses were raised, and Britain once again remembered.

For one final moment, history stood still - not merely in memory, but in a shared promise to ensure the sacrifices of the past remain forever honoured in the future.

Britain had once again stood together, not only to commemorate history but to ensure its lessons and its spirit live on.

King Charles III address to the nation

It is now eighty years since my grandfather, King George VI, announced to the nation and the Commonwealth that 'the dreadful shadow of war has passed from our hearths and our homes'. The liberation of Europe was secured.

His words echo down through history as all this week, and especially today, we unite to celebrate and remember with an unwavering and heartfelt gratitude, the service and sacrifice of the wartime generation who made that hard-fought victory possible. While our greatest debt is owed to all those who paid the ultimate price, we should never forget how the war changed the lives of virtually everyone.

Now, as then, we are united in giving utmost thanks to all those who served in the Armed Forces, the uniformed services, the Home Front, - indeed all the people of this country, the Commonwealth and beyond whose firm resolve and fortitude helped destroy Nazism and carry our allied nations through to V.E. Day. That debt can never truly be repaid; but we can, and we will, remember them. Over the course of the last year, there have been 80th anniversaries across Europe, from the hills of Monte Cassino to the Lower Rhine at Arnhem.

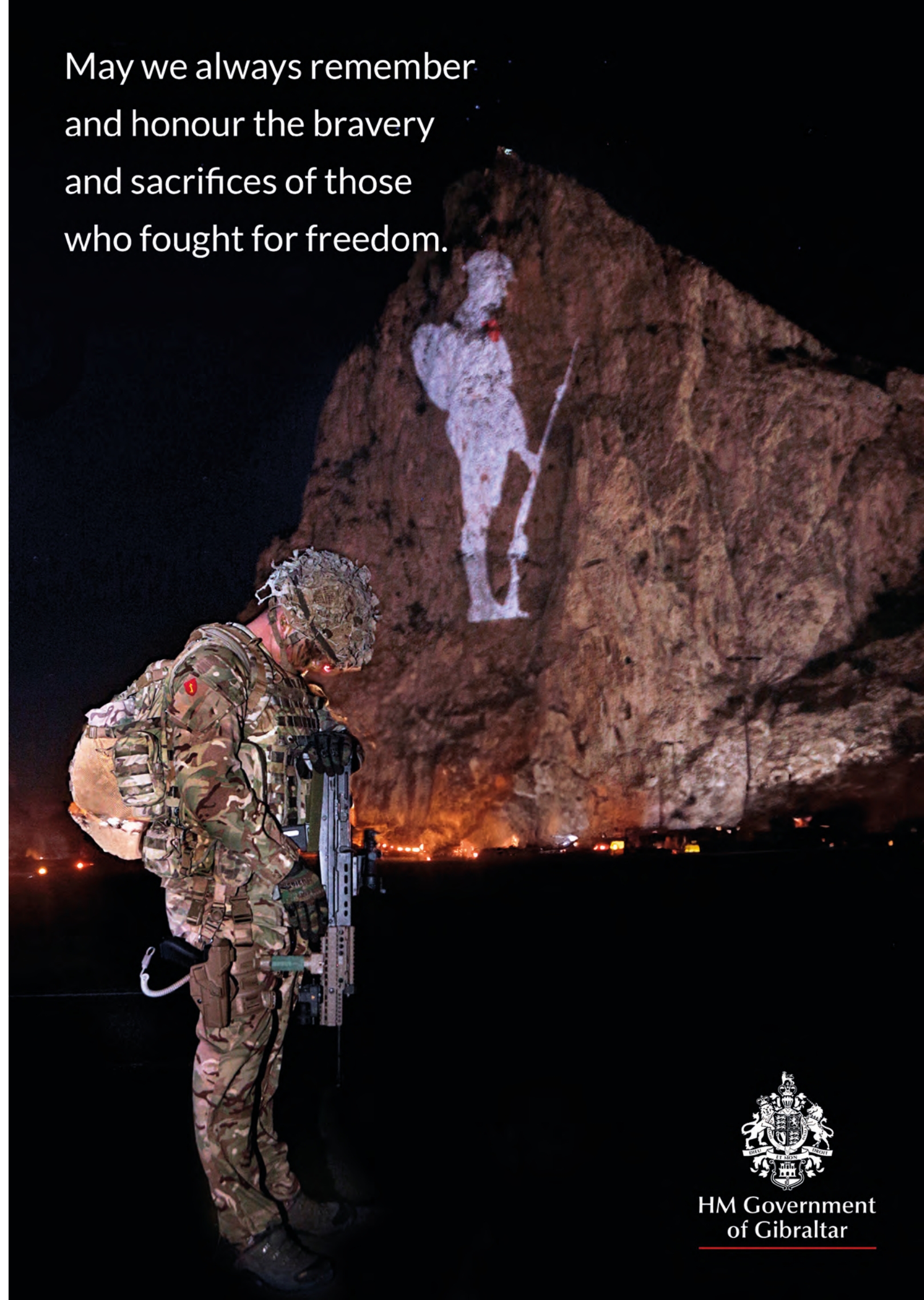
Last June, my wife and I were profoundly moved to join veterans of D-Day at the new national memorial overlooking Gold Beach, as they returned to honour their comrades who never came home. In January, as the world marked the liberation of Auschwitz, I met survivors whose stories of unspeakable horror were the most vivid reminder of why Victory in Europe truly was the triumph of good over evil. All these moments, and more, combine to lead us to this day, when we recall both those darkest days and the great jubilation when the threat of death and destruction was finally lifted from our shores.

The celebration that evening was marked by my own late mother who, just nineteen-years-old, described in her diary how she mingled anonymously in the crowds across central London and, in her own words, 'walked for miles' among them. The rejoicing continued into the next day, when she wrote: 'Out in the crowd again. Embankment, Piccadilly. Rained, so fewer people. Conga-ed into House. Sang till 2 a.m. Bed at 3 a.m.!'

Ladies and Gentlemen, I do hope your celebrations tonight are almost as joyful, although I rather doubt I shall have the energy to sing until 2 a.m., let alone for that matter to lead you all in a giant conga from here back to Buckingham Palace!

The Allied victory being celebrated then, as now, was a result of unity between nations, races, religions and ideologies, fighting back against an existential threat to humanity.

Their collective endeavour remains a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when countries stand together in the face of tyranny. But even as we rejoice again today, we must also remember those who were still fighting, still living with conflict and starvation on the other side of the world. For them, peace would not come until months later with V.J. Day – Victory in the Pacific – which my father witnessed at first-hand from the deck of his destroyer, *HMS Whelp*.


May we always remember
and honour the bravery
and sacrifices of those
who fought for freedom.
HM Government
of Gibraltar

MESSAGE FROM

General (retd) Sir James Everard KCB CBE

Colonel, The Royal Lancers (Queen Elizabeths' Own)

When the guns fell silent in Europe and again in the Pacific, Britain emerged from the crucible of war forever changed. Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan were not just military triumphs - they were hard-won reprieves from global catastrophe. British forces had fought across continents, from the skies above Kent to the jungles of Burma, and their sacrifices etched a legacy of courage and endurance into the national conscience.

Today, as we mark these anniversaries, the world is once again unsettled. War has returned to Europe. Global alliances are strained. Authoritarianism is resurgent in places where democracy once seemed secure. The certainties of the post-war order - so painstakingly built on the ashes of conflict - are being tested. In this climate, VE and VJ Day take on renewed significance.

The British servicemen and women of the Second World War did not fight for conquest or glory. They fought for survival, for liberty, and for the hope of a better world. Their victory was not inevitable. It was earned in the mud of Normandy, the skies over Berlin, and the unforgiving terrain of the Burma Campaign - where the so-called "Forgotten Army" battled on long after the celebrations of VE Day had faded.

In remembering them, we are reminded of the fragility of peace. The unity that carried Britain through the darkest days of the Blitz and the longest nights of the Pacific War stands in stark contrast to the polarisation we see today. Yet their example endures. The quiet dignity of veterans, the solemnity of remembrance services, the enduring power of shared memory - these are not relics of the past, but guideposts for the present.

VE and VJ Day are not just commemorations; they are calls to vigilance. They ask us to honour the past not only with wreaths and silence, but with action - with a renewed commitment to the values for which so many gave their lives.

In a world once again shadowed by uncertainty, the legacy of 1945 reminds us that freedom is never free, and that remembrance is not passive. It is a promise - to remember, to reflect, and to stand firm in defence of peace.

2025

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Colonel-in-Chief : HM The Queen

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12th Royal Lancers
(Prince of Wales's)

16th/5th Lancers

17th/21st Lancers

24th Lancers

27th Lancers

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Sherman tanks of 'C' Squadron, 9th Queen's Royal Lancers, 2nd Armoured Brigade, 1st Armoured Division, 5 November 1942. Copyright © IWM (E 18972).

STEEL IN SAND

The desert was not kind. But neither were we when the call came - The Lancers

As the storm clouds of war descended over Europe in 1939, Britain's famed lancer regiments - steeped in tradition yet reborn with mechanized fervour - found themselves not on horseback, but in armoured columns, ready to confront the Axis powers across deserts, plains, and ruined cities.

9th Queen's Royal Lancers

In the crucible of the North African campaign, the 9th Lancers earned their reputation in the swirling sands of Libya and Egypt. As part of the 1st Armoured Division, they faced Rommel's Afrika Korps in punishing tank battles near Tobruk and El Alamein, Corporal Nicholls of B Squadron was personally congratulated by General Montgomery for knocking out nine enemy tanks in one day. When the campaign shifted to Italy, they were among the first armoured units to breach the Gustav Line, braving minefields and artillery to press northward through Monte Cassino and the Liri Valley.

12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's)

Equipped with armoured cars and unmatched reconnaissance skill, the 12th were the eyes and ears of British forces during the Blitzkrieg. In May 1940, they carried out daring missions as German forces overwhelmed Belgium and France. Their finest hour came during the Dunkirk evacuation, where their nimble manoeuvres and intelligence gathering helped buy precious hours for stranded troops. Later deployed to North Africa and Italy, they continued their tradition of stealth and resilience. B Squadron troops were the first to enter Venice at the end of April. When the war in Italy ended on the 2nd of May, the 12th was in contact with the Yugoslavs at Trieste. After the war the Regiment was employed on security duties in Palestine.

16th/5th Lancers

Born from a union of gallant Victorian-era regiments, the 16th/5th fought with distinction in Tunisia and then through a sixteen-month gruelling campaign in Italy, landing at Naples in January 1944. In the hills of Salerno and the marshes of Anzio, they brought armoured might to the fragile front lines. Their presence at the Battle of Monte Cassino helped crack the German defence, proving that even among ruins, tradition could endure. On 2nd May 1945, the German army in Italy surrendered, followed days later by the unconditional surrender of all enemy forces. The 16th/5th Lancers found themselves further west than any other regiment in the 8th Army, linking up with the American 5th Army.

17th/21st Lancers

Nicknamed "Death or Glory Boys," the 17th/21st were known not just for their skull-and-crossbones badge, but for the ferocity behind it. Deployed in North Africa in November 1942, they fought in the desert and became veterans of the campaign against Rommel, and in Italy they were instrumental in the final push through the Po Valley (the Regiments final action of the Second World War), leading breakthroughs that hastened the enemy's collapse. By VE Day the 17th/21st Lancers had lost 21 officers, and 135 other ranks killed.

Through tanks instead of sabres, and maps marked by grit rather than hoofprints, the Royal Lancers' forebears helped shape the outcome of the Second World War. Their legacy is one of evolution: from horsemen to armoured knights, from battlefield tactics to enduring regimental spirit. Their deeds echo still etched in history, honoured in colours, and immortalized in the motto: ***Death or Glory.***

Sergeant Elms of 16/5 Lancers and his tank crew at El Aroussa; Trooper Bates, Royal Armoured Corps, Signalman Bower, Royal Signals, and Trooper Goddard, Royal Armoured Corps, clean the 6-pounder gun of their Crusader tank while preparing for the drive on Tunis. ©IWM (TR 939).

LANCERS BATTLE HONOURS

Dunkirk 1940 | Bhurtpore | Aliwal | Sobroan (1846) | Kasserine | Relief of Kimberly | Paardeberg | Gulf 1991 | Egypt (1801) | South Africa 1851-53 | Punjaub (1849) | Lucknow (1858) | Fondouk | Arras 1917 | Argenta Gap (Apr 45) | Peninsula (1808) | Bologna (Apr 45) | Italy 1944-45 | Tunis | Cassino II | N. Africa 1941-43 | Suakin 1885 | Ramilles | Somme 1940 | Gazala (May 1942) | South Africa 1899-1902 | Waterloo (1815) | Somme 1916, 18 | Ruweisat (1942) | Salamanca | Blenheim | Mons | Khartoum | NW Frontier India 1915, 16 | Sevastopol(1854) | Alma | Delhi 1857 | Central India 1857 | Afghanistan 1878-80 | Charasiah (1879) | Messines 1914 | Ypres 1914, 15 | El Alamein (Oct 1942) | Balaklava | Cambrai 1917, 18 | South Africa 1879 | Defence of Lamone Bridgehead | Iraq 2003 | Punniar (1843) | North-West Europe 1940 |

“IT FELT LIKE HOME RIGHT AWAY.”

People were like-minded. I may not have been in the military for a while, but it’s something I’ve known all my life. It was like stepping back into that world – the banter, the friendliness. There’s one person here who I served with in Germany 50 years ago. I didn’t know anyone else, but it felt like home right away.

The place itself is amazing. I was never big on history, but I’ve walked down the stairs on the long ward and seen where they’re worn and I think of the Chelsea Pensioners who have been here before me. Or I’ll be sitting in the Great Hall or Wren Chapel and I’ll think, “Blimey, Christopher Wren has been here”. You wouldn’t know you were in the middle of London either.

I feel proud to be a Chelsea Pensioner. The first time it hit me was when I tried the Scarlet on – it felt amazing! Then, Founder’s Day happened a few weeks after I moved in. I’ve always had respect for the Chelsea Pensioners and for old soldiers in general and to be able to be part of that is unbelievable. It’s like being part of a family. This year, I’m lucky enough to be going to the Royal Albert Hall Festival of Remembrance and to the Cenotaph parade the next day – so that’s two things crossed off my bucket list!

It’s reassuring to know that I don’t have to go anywhere from here and that everything is taken care of. I’ve come to start a new chapter. I haven’t found any downside to the Royal Hospital, it suits me down to the ground and I’d tell everyone to give it a go and apply.

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CHELSEA PENSIONERS

BRITISH POWs

The unassuming man who, over the years, drove hundreds of children in the school buses of south Nottinghamshire was a war hero - not that any of them knew that. Alec Gilbert was not the sort of man to boast. His generation didn't. They had seen and done much but they kept quiet about it, even with their own families. So it was only after he died that, among his personal effects, Mr Gilbert's sons found proof of his outstanding bravery in northern France in June 1940.

The Dunkirk beaches had been evacuated in the spectacular small-boat rescue of the British Army much hailed by Winston Churchill, but many thousands of soldiers who had not made it to the beaches remained in France, trying to hold off the rapidly advancing Germans until they could find another way home.

Corporal Gilbert of the Signals Corp was one of those men. With bombs from German planes and shells from enemy artillery exploding all around him, he drove a lorry to pick up fuel for five stranded British tanks.

It was a mission impossible, on roads crowded with refugees and riddled with craters, but, grimly sticking to his task, he made it - an act of 'outstanding courage, initiative and devotion to duty', according to the citation for bravery which was unearthed on his death.

Alec Gilbert was one of millions of ordinary, unsung British soldiers, sailors and airmen who fought their war between 1939 and 1945 with all the courage they could muster and then came home and got on with their lives, somehow burying the horrors they had experienced and quietly moving on.

'Dad' was in bombers, on an Arctic convoy, at Alamein, D-Day, Arnhem and so on, these missives would tell me, but he would never talk about it.

'And now he's dead I will never know' is often the haunting refrain of those who realise one of the mainstays of their life kept a huge secret from them that it is now too late to unearth.

Peter Stokes does know what his father, Horace, was doing 70 years ago - but when he found out, it was a huge shock. He discovered only on his father's deathbed that the genial greengrocer and later cheery pub landlord had been a pioneering member of the elite, daredevil SAS. He parachuted into Nazi territory on secret sabotage missions and escaped from two POW camps.

His extraordinary exploits were detailed in a journal he handed to his son shortly before he died in 1986, which is now being published.
'I was filled with pride when I read it,' says Mr Stokes. A military man himself, with distinguished service in the RAF, he was nonetheless 'awestruck' by the deeds his father described.

'He was involved in some of the most famous raids during the World War II, and yet he'd never mentioned a word of it. At the end of the war, he closed the door on what he had done. He had killed many, many people and had seen his best friends killed. But I know there was not a night that passed when he did not sit and reflect on what he had done.'

Secrecy was (and still is) emblematic of the SAS, and that may have been why Stokes Senior waited so long to unburden himself. For many others, however, their reluctance to talk about the war was because they felt they had wasted their youth in uniform and simply wanted to forget it. As one veteran commented: 'When I got home, I didn't say much about what had happened to me. I didn't want to burden anyone. All I wanted to do was go

out and have fun again.' He promptly met the girl who would become his wife. 'We hit it off really well and were married three months later. I didn't want to tell her about it. It was behind me. We had a new life of our own to lead.'

For many others, their years of silence were because they could not bear to let their minds go back to horrors they had experienced or because they simply thought no one would be interested.

In 1945, when the war ended, there was little appetite to hear someone else's sob story or even their tale of courage and derring-do.

Those who had fought overseas came home to a country that was rationed, blitzed and on its knees economically. Pretty soon the struggle to survive the peace outweighed the nostalgic re-living of the glories of the war.

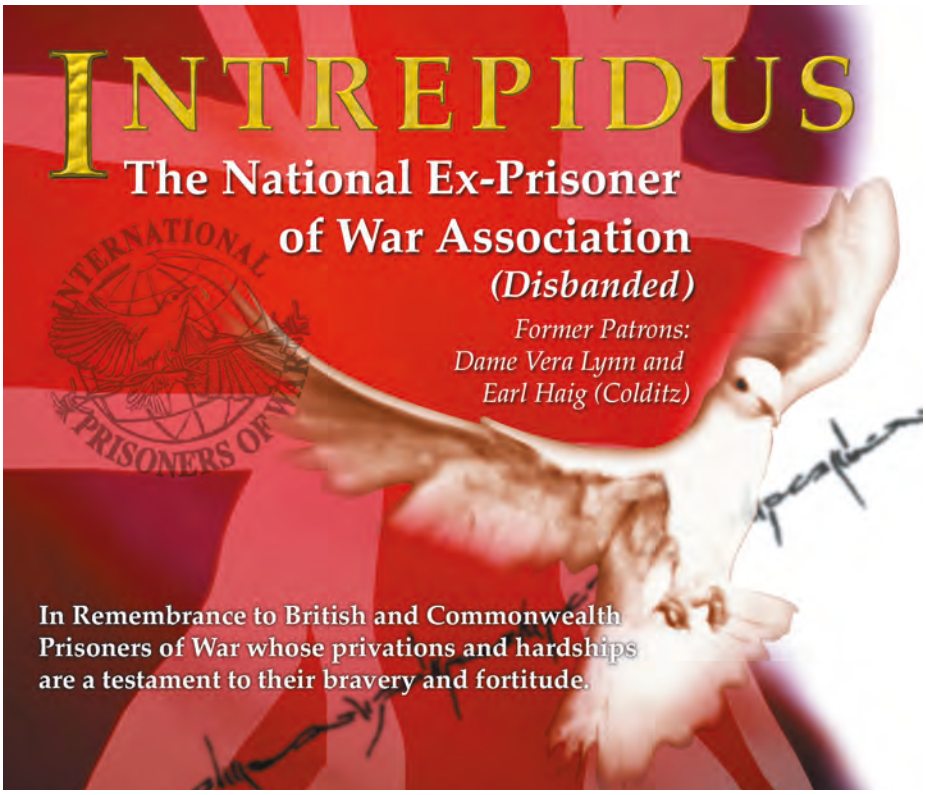
Heroes were two a penny, and treated as even less. Take RAF Sergeant Jimmy 'Dixie' Deans, a man of exceptional courage and integrity.

As the leader of thousands of British inmates of a prisoner of war (POW) camp in remote eastern Germany, he had the commanding presence to shepherd his men on the notorious 500-mile Long March to the west, forced on them by their German captors who were fleeing advancing Russian troops.

He somehow found enough food to sustain them in a barren land and, through guts and guile, negotiated them safely past trigger-happy SS troops. When the column was accidentally strafed by our own side and 60 men were shot to pieces, he cycled and bluffed his way through the German front line, then over no man's land to the advancing British lines to warn them to be more careful.

And then, because he had given his word to the Germans who still held his men, he went back the way he had come, back into captivity. Fellow prisoners were in awe of Deans's daring. He ended up as an anonymous civilian pen-pusher, afflicted by multiple sclerosis, forgotten by everyone except the hundreds of ex-POWs who turned up for his funeral in 1989.

Men who had been POWs in the war often kept quiet about their experiences, ashamed - for no good reason - about having been captured. In northern France, Private Jock Graham - unlike Alec Gilbert, who escaped via Cherbourg -



surrendered to the Germans at gunpoint, but only after two weeks on the run. As a POW, 'Dad's humour and optimism kept him going through forced marches and work in Polish mines', according to his daughter, Janette.

For decades, he suppressed memories of the awful times he'd had - the crippling work, hunger, brutality - but they surfaced in the end in the saddest of ways, relived horrifically in the dementia of his old age.

As well as the POWs, airmen who had fought in Bomber Command also tended to keep quiet about what they had done, embarrassed by the unwarranted vitriol poured on them for the war they waged on German cities and civilians. But to have sat cramped inside the narrow and freezing fuselage of a Lancaster for hours on end, bucketed by winds and then battered by flak, shell-shot and shrapnel, was a test of endurance and courage, whatever the merits and morality of the mission you were sent on.

The rear gunner was uniquely exposed, staring out into nothingness, just a thin layer of Perspex between him and 20,000ft of thin air, the original man in a glasshouse waiting for stones to be thrown at him.

There were so many ways to die - a bullet in the face, sucked out if the casing shattered, burnt alive if the plane caught fire, drowned if you crashed into the sea, crushed if you fell on land.

They could only pray, as they all did, they wouldn't be next. If you were hit, you knew the chances of survival were small. The death rate for Bomber Command crew was a chilling 50per cent. And yet they went out night after night, fearing the worst, suppressing the fear.

Such men kept their thoughts to themselves. They did not 'tweet' their feelings to all and sundry - despite their emotions and experiences being of a profundity that shames the trivia of so much of today's instant communication.

They did not shout the odds about what they had done because tomorrow they might well be dead - as their best friend probably already was - or at best maimed and scarred for life.

And after it was all over, they kept quiet because they were just thankful to be alive.

This was a generation that went to the edge and looked over. Those who came back were humbled by the experience - and, in this vainglorious, look-at-me 21st-century society of ours, that demands respect. Respect for their courage but also respect for their humility.

War-time duty: Horace Stokes, left, is pictured aged 18 with colleagues just after joining the artillery. He too stayed tight-lipped about his wartime exploits.

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ECHOES OF COURAGE: A CHILD'S WAR

Remembering Those Who Stayed and Those Who Served

"There but for the grace of God go I"

Joyce Wetton, (89), recounts her childhood memories of wartime in the East-end of London, pays tribute to her parents, and gives thanks for the life she has been afforded on account of their bravery.

Young Joyce - the photo carried by her father throughout the war. Joyce now aged 89.

I was born in Dalston on 16 October 1935.

When I was 2 years old, we moved to Old Street, City Road, EC1.

It was here that our world was turned upside down with the outbreak of the Second World War.

My father was called up and served with the Royal Army Medical Corps for the duration of the war and, like so many children, I didn't see him for a long time.

The London Blitz meant that I was evacuated to Wiltshire. I was 4 years old and lucky in that my mother was allowed to travel with me. It was an unhappy time as the lady of the house did not like children. I did start school there and we stayed for 3 years before my mother decided that we should return to City Road. She felt dodging bombs was preferable to being treated cruelly by the host. The next 3 years were spent in Sutton dwellings running in and out of shelters with pillows and blankets tucked under our arms.

Doodlebugs* flew above us. It was terrifying to hear their distinctive buzz. I remember crouching in our passage praying that the bomb would not drop on us. When the underground was opened to provide shelter, we tried sleeping in Old Street tube station at night. Not very quiet.

We returned to the shelter of the buildings where we lived. I put on my Mickey Mouse face mask. That awful smell has never left me. There were many near misses and many sleepless nights. We clambered in and out of our beds - often 4 times each night.

Throughout the war years, my dad always carried my photo in his wallet. This photograph ended up in Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp** when it was liberated and my dad was tasked with feeding the starving prisoners who had been incarcerated there.

A quiet man, he never spoke of the scenes he witnessed.

There but for the grace of God, I was spared and am writing this today.

Thank you for sharing this part of your life with us, Joyce, in your 90th year.

VE DAY Street Party 1945 -Joyce pictured front left, her mum is second on the right in her apron.

'The smallest'- her dad pictured on the left.

REFLECTIONS ON VICTORY AND REMEMBRANCE

Eight decades later, emotions surrounding VE Day (8 May 1945) and VJ Day (15 August 1945) remain complex. These dates marked the end of the most devastating conflict in human history. They represented victory and the continuation of man's journey towards understanding the cost of freedom.

For children like Joyce, the war years shaped an entire generation's understanding of resilience, sacrifice, and how precious life is. Her father's service with the Royal Army Medical Corps took him from caring for his own family to tending the most broken victims of humanity's darkest chapter. Her mother's courage in choosing to face London's bombs rather than see her child mistreated speaks to the fierce protection that defined the home front.

Victory was won on distant battlefields and in daily acts of courage by ordinary people. A four-year-old child adapting to evacuation, a mother making impossible choices, a father carrying his daughter's photograph through the liberation of hell itself.

Today, as Joyce prepares to celebrate her 90th birthday, her words echo across the generations:

"There but for the grace of God go I."

It is a reminder that our freedom rests not only on the shoulders of those who fought and died, but on those who endured, who survived, and who chose to tell their stories so that we might never forget. In remembering Joyce's childhood, we honour all who contributed to the freedom we enjoy today. Celebrated heroes and countless children, mothers, fathers, and families who faced the unthinkable with quiet courage.

Their legacy is our liberty.

Their story is our inheritance.

Lest We Forget

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*V1 flying bombs were pilotless, winged missiles. Nicknamed 'doodlebugs' or 'buzz bombs' due to the distinctive sound they made in flight, they were a terror weapon causing significant damage and civilian casualties in England and other parts of Europe.

**British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen on 15 April 1945. Thousands of bodies lay unburied around the camp and some 60,000 starving and mortally ill people were packed together without food, water, or basic sanitation. For many survivors, the process of recovery and repatriation continued long after the end of the war. Over 14,000 prisoners would die after liberation.

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ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND

A pivotal role in Britain's victory

Air Chief Marshal
Sir Arthur Travers 'Bomber" Harris

Aircrew in full flying kit walking beneath the nose of Short Stirling Mark I, N3676 'S', of 1651 Heavy Conversion Unit at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. Copyright © IWM (TR9)

The Butt Report, published in August 1941, examined the performance over three months of British bombers against targets in France and Germany. David Miles Bensusan-Butt, a member of the War Cabinet Secretariat, had examined hundreds of photographs taken at the moment of bomb release and concluded that, in the summer of 1941, only a third of Bomber Command aircraft had succeeded in placing their bombs within 8 km (5 miles) of the aiming point.

In February 1942, Bomber Command received a new directive. The main weight of its operations was to be thrown into "area" attacks on German cities. The aiming points were to be built-up areas rather than specific industrial plants and facilities. Precision raids continued, but from this point to May 1945, 75 per cent of the total tonnage of bombs dropped fell on area targets. In the spring of 1942, Bomber Command was better placed to execute the new policy. Its twin-engined Wellington, Whitely, Blenheim and Hampden bombers were gradually giving way to a generation of four-engined bombers capable of delivering bigger payloads - the Short Stirling, Handley Page Halifax, and Avro Lancaster.

Simultaneously, the Butt report was bearing fruit. Late in 1941, the first of a series of navigational aids, "Gee", was introduced. By February 1942, 200 aircraft had been fitted with Gee, a modification which led to the introduction of specialist bomb aimers. The job had previously been handled by the navigator. As Gee was going into service, a new commander arrived at Bomber Command's headquarters in High Wycombe, outside London.

The appointment of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris was the single most important factor in the systematic organisation of the bombing offensive. Harris never abandoned the belief that the progressive destruction of the urban areas of Germany would, by itself, bring the war to an end. His intention was to mount increasingly heavy raids, compressed into progressively shorter periods of time, thus overwhelming German civil defences on the ground.

On the night of the 3rd/4th March, 235 aircraft attacked the Renault works at Billancourt in occupied France. The concentration achieved on the raid was about 120 aircraft an hour, a first step towards saturation raids of the later war years. Production at the Billancourt factory was not resumed for three months.

Harris now turned his attention to the Baltic cities of Lübeck and Rostock. The latter was the site of the Heinkel aircraft works, but the main reason for their choice of targets was their vulnerability to incendiary attack. The densely packed streets of the medieval cities were like tinderboxes. Lübeck was bombed on the 28th/29th March 1942 and a

A Handley Page Halifax of No 6 Group flies over the smoke obscured target during a daylight maid on the of refinery at Wanne-Eickel in the Ruhr, 12 October 1944. Copyright: © IWM (C 4713).

month later Rostock was subjected to four raids in quick succession.

Harris had a flair for publicity, which he exploited to the full in the 1,000 bomber raid against Cologne on 30th/31st May, 1942. In operation Millennium, Harris planned to throw the whole of his front line strength, and his entire reserve, into a massive raid on a major German city.

It was a tremendous gamble, but the prize was the survival of the strategic bombing offensive. Of the 1,047 aircraft which took off that night, 367 were from training units. During the attack, which lasted just under two and a half hours, some 870 bombers dropped 1,445 tons of bombs. The fires the bombers left behind burned for several days. Some 50,000 people were "dehoused". Harris launched two more "1,000" raids, against Essen (June 1st) and Bremen (June 25th). Neither matched the success of the Cologne raid and both operations suffered mounting losses to the Luftwaffe's night fighters.

The man responsible for the improving German night fighter defences was General Josef Kammhuber, who established the so-called "Kammhuber Line, a system of closely controlled fighter-defended areas covering every approach to Germany from Denmark to France. The Kammhuber Line consisted of "boxes", each of which was controlled by a small radar station deploying both long-range early-warning radar and narrow-beam systems. The latter could pick up and hold a bomber at the range of 48km (30 miles) and then direct a night fighter to a target.

The major drawback of this system was that only one fighter could operate in a box at any given time. By concentrating its bombers in a 'Stream', Bomber Command could pass through as few as four boxes on an inward flight, although there was tendency to spread out on the way home, bringing more night fighters into play. Even before the United States entered the war, Anglo-American strategic discussion had resulted in the decision to direct the main weight of Allied effort against Germany.

To defeat Germany, the United States pledged complete land, sea and air participation in the Anglo-American effort. The United States Army Air Force (USAAF) was confident that, given a sufficient number of aircraft, it could conduct a strategic bombing offensive which would bring Germany to its knees.

55,573 Bomber Command crew lost their lives in the Second World War.

At the core of the USAAF's philosophy were two firmly held beliefs: first, that high-level daylight precision bombing could be employed to break down the key elements in the German war economy. Second, in the absence of a satisfactory long-ranged escort fighter, the heavily armed USAAF Flying Fortress and Liberator bombers could fight their way to and from their targets without suffering unacceptable losses.

THE MERCHANT NAVY IN WORLD WAR II

Britain's Fourth Service

Captain David Parsons MNM (former National Secretary, Merchant Navy Association)

Whilst commemorating the end of World War II the primary focus has been around the efforts and sacrifices of the armed services. Less well known, but vital to the outcome, were the unsung heroes, the men and a few women of the Merchant Navy. Throughout the conflict merchant ships were almost constantly in the front-line – always vulnerable at sea and often, also, in port. They took troops to the scene of battle and sustained them where they fought. They carried food without which the population of Britain and other countries would have starved and supplies, without which the needs of the fighting forces and the civilian economies which nourished them could not have been met. The title, the Merchant Navy, was bestowed on the commercial fleets of Britain and its Empire in 1919 by HM King George V in recognition of the huge contribution and sacrifices made in the First War. In World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave it a second name, the Fourth Service, placing it on equal footing to the armed services.

Ships of the British and Commonwealth Merchant Navies were manned by civilian crews – some were long serving officers and ratings, whilst other were volunteers, many of whom chose this before they were conscripted, usually in the full understanding of the dangers they would face. Many crews were supplemented by ratings from the Indian Subcontinent, Hong Kong and Africa. At no time were there more than 200,000 serving British seafarers yet the official death toll exceeded 32,000. In fact, the true toll is widely believed to have exceeded 40,000, one reason being that, unlike the armed services, only those who died as a direct result of enemy action were listed in the Roll of Honour. Even using the official losses, those figures amount to a significantly greater proportion, than the losses among the three-armed services.

Britain declared war on Germany at 5.00 p.m. on 3rd September. At 7.40 p.m. the Donaldson Line passenger ship *s.s. Athenia*, on passage to Montreal, was torpedoed by a U-boat 200 miles north-west of Ireland. 93 passengers and 19 crew members were lost, including four stewardesses. These were the very first British casualties of the War although, among the passengers, were also those of other nationalities. Thus began the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous campaign of World War II, which only ended on VE Day, 8th May 1945. The 3rd September is now officially marked as Merchant Navy.

As war became inevitable, merchant ships were given sealed orders and armed with 4" and anti-aircraft guns, to be manned by Army and Royal Navy gunners supported by crew members. At the outbreak many MN officers were Royal Navy Reservists and were rapidly conscripted. To help fill the need for experienced men, many others returned to the sea from shore positions, some even coming back out of retirement. Because most had no uniform, younger men, in particular were mistakenly seen as draft dodgers and sometimes subject to abuse. To counter this they were given MN lapel badges. Some merchant ships and trawlers were requisitioned where many of their crew members volunteered to stay, retaining their pay and conditions, but were placed under Naval discipline.

The first convoys sailed in early September 1939. These were protected for around the first 200 miles, by a handful of escorts and short-range patrol aircraft. From there the ships sailed independently. At that time the U-Boat fleet was small with a limited operational range and therefore the greatest danger, in mid ocean, was from a few surface raiders. The most well-known is, perhaps, the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* which sank nine merchant ships (all the seamen were taken prisoner) in the South Atlantic before being scuttled following the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. As the war progressed surface raiders largely gave way to U-boats whose priority targets were always merchant ships, the view being that if enough were sunk, Britain would be starved into surrender. As the war progressed so did the size and capabilities of the U-Boat fleet. Over time their hunting grounds extended far into the Atlantic, eventually operating off the eastern seaboard of America, the Caribbean and even into the Indian Ocean. In the mid-Atlantic, from 1941, up to 20 U-Boats would operate in "wolf-packs", initially spreading out to spot a convoy and then gathering for a co-ordinated attack. For the first three years merchant ship losses were enormous prompting Churchill to say that it was this that worried him the most. At the same time the number of escorts, initially many leased from US Navy reserve fleet, grew as did air cover. Technical advances in underwater detection, better equipped escorts, small aircraft carriers and increasingly longer-range shore-based patrol aircraft together with, very importantly, intelligence from Bletchley Park (deciphering the Enigma messages to and from the U-boats, revealing their positions) increasingly began to win through. In December 1941, USA's entry into the war, as well as being an immensely powerful ally, also gave the allies open access to that country's enormous resources. America could build vessels, such a Liberty ships and aircraft, on an industrial scale.

On the downside Germany was joined by Japan, which operated in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and nowhere at sea was safe.

In June 1941 Germany declared war on Russia, a country with a potentially huge army but very limited weaponry and other resources. Its leader, Josef Stalin, demanded that the western allies send huge quantities of munitions and supplies. This required convoys to sail into Arctic waters, around German held Norway, where the freezing weather conditions alone were appalling. Here were more U-boats but also the convoys were in easy range German bombers. The chances of survival for those who abandoned ship were very small but time and time again they went back. Albeit in a warmer climate, the war in the Mediterranean was equally brutal. The story of the Malta Convoy in July 1942 is legendary and out of 14 merchant vessels, only five reached the beleaguered island. Their efforts and sacrifices, alongside those from all the armed services that helped protect them, saved Malta from surrender and shortened the war in North Africa and the Mediterranean by many months, possibly more.

For the crews of ships, the war was a long, exhausting and frightening experience. An attack could happen at any time and in almost any place. In shallow waters there were numerous minefields. Close to enemy airfields, air attack could be equally effective using bombs or torpedoes. In the Straits of Dover ships would be shelled from ashore, as they would, inshore, when supporting the invasions of North Africa, Italy and Normandy where, there too, they sustained losses. The speed of a convoy was dictated by the slowest ship and rarely more than 10 knots, making the merchant ships a slow target. If the weather allowed men would often sleep on deck in their life-jackets. When attacked a ship's cargo would dictate the possible fate of the crew. A ship carrying ammunition might explode in seconds. Those carrying bulk cargoes, such as iron ore, could sink very rapidly. Those carrying petrochemicals could expect the cargo to ignite with blazing oil spilling into the surrounding sea. The most dangerous working environment was the engine-room which, in almost all ships, except tankers, was amidships, the primary aiming point for a U-boat. Those lucky enough to abandon ship stood little chance of being picked up as all vessels were ordered not to stop for fear of becoming an easy target. Many men perished in open boats, or on rafts, suffering from hypothermia, exposure, or starvation. Some survivors spent weeks adrift before being rescued. Even in port, or at anchor, there was often the risk of bombing. There was even a prisoner of war camp for merchant seamen near Bremen in Germany. Those captured by the Japanese were often brutally treated, sent to work on the railways or in the mines. Even worse, some were machine gunned in the water and in at least one case, beheaded.

Seafarers had little choice of ship and no choice of the voyage as every ship was under "Admiralty Charter" meaning that they sailed under government orders as required. They were granted only two days leave for every month worked and 30 days unpaid survivor's leave if their ship was sunk. To make matters worse, at the outset, British merchant seamen, if they survived, would not be paid from the moment the ship went down. The reasoning was that their services were no longer required by their employer (the shipping company) once the ship was lost, although sometimes there were exceptions. When Churchill learned of this, in May 1941, he ordered this heartless practice to be stopped immediately. Notwithstanding, the seafarers remained stoic and returned to sea time and time again. Like the military they became a tight knit band of brothers.

The last British merchant ship lost was the *Avondale Park* in the Firth of Forth, when two seamen perished on 7th May 1945 - just one day before Germany surrendered. This also marked the end of the Battle of the Atlantic but ships continued to sail to and around the Far East until Japan, also, surrendered. Throughout that time, out of around 4,500 allied merchant ships lost worldwide, the cost to Britain alone was 2,535 vessels. Whilst all too often overlooked by the media and others, Britain and its allies owe a huge debt of gratitude to the heroic men and women of the Merchant Navy and those of other allied merchant fleets. Like their military counterparts, Merchant Navy personnel have always been awarded campaign medals. In recognition of their contribution, bravery and sacrifices, the Merchant Navy's flag, the Red Ensign, is allocated a place on the Cenotaph in Whitehall alongside the flags of the three armed services. Furthermore, those who gave their lives as a result of enemy action are formally recognised by the British War Graves Commission. The names of those whose grave is the sea are recorded on the Commission's Merchant Navy War Memorial on Tower Hill, London, whilst all those whose bodies were recovered were allocated a British War Grave.

mna

From ship to shore, from past to present

THE MERCHANT NAVY ASSOCIATION

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Message from Captain Sir Ian McNaught, KCVO MNM President, Merchant Navy Association

None of the allied services engaged in World War II was in action longer, or suffered a higher percentage of casualties, than the British Merchant Navy. In total some 2,535 merchant ships and 116 fishing vessels, were lost.

At the very least around 32,000 seafarers either went down with their ships, or were killed in action, some as young as 14 years old. During these recent 80th anniversary commemorations of D Day and VE Day, dare I say, their service and sacrifice was much undervalued and little acknowledged.

My former office in Trinity House in London overlooked the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill. On that memorial are carved the words

"it is upon them, under the good providence of God, that our wealth, safety and very existence, almost wholly depends."

My generation of seafarers owe so much to those who went to sea in those terrible years, and even now the prosperity of the United Kingdom owes so much "to those who go down to the sea in ships."

LEGENDS OF THE LONGEST DAY

Photographs by Glyn Dewis

The **WW2 39-45 Portraits Project** by Glyn Dewis aims to honour surviving veterans by photographing as many of them as is possible.

Mr Dewis hopes the projects will continue to sensitively educate the current and future younger generations about the horrors of the Second World War while highlighting those who served, survived and were lost.

To see the full collection visit

www.glyndewis.com/3945-portraits-project

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Laurie Weeden Glider Pilot Regiment

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Stan Swansborough Royal Corps of Signals

Gordon Drabble South Staffordshire Regiment

Victor Urch Royal Navy

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By the Corps Historian - Dr Nigel Warwick

The Early Years The military disasters in France, Crete and in the Far East in the early years of the war had demonstrated the vulnerability of RAF airfields to attack from the air and the ground, particularly by airborne troops. The RAF Regiment was, therefore, established by the Royal Warrant of HM King George VI, on 1 February 1942, and the first Commandant of the RAF Regiment, Maj-Gen. Claude Liardet took command of the 75,000 gunners deployed across the UK, and 10,000 in the Middle East, Africa, Aden, Egypt, Libya and India.

First Actions

The first active deployment of RAF Regiment personnel overseas was in November 1942, when five field (infantry) squadrons and a number of light anti-aircraft (LAA) flights landed in French North Africa on Operation TORCH. Flights of gunners also accompanied the two RAF Armoured Car Companies, which had been fighting in Egypt and Libya since 1940, in the decisive campaigns to free the North African shores of the Axis powers.

Italian Campaign

The next move by the Allied Forces were the landings in Sicily. Two field and nine LAA squadrons took part in the defence of captured airfields, suffering heavy losses, later landing in Italy in September 1943.

By May 1944, field squadrons held parts of the frontline around the Monte Cassino battlefield, while others performed specialist roles in Ground-Air Landmarking and Forward Air Control. They participated in the invasion of Southern France in August 1944, and in the final battles in northern Italy in 1945 and then the German surrender. The squadrons moved into Austria as an occupation force and began dealing with the developing Cold War tensions with the Soviet forces.

The Balkans and Beyond

Squadrons were operating with the Balkan Air Force and provided airfield defence to the Special Forces operating with Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia and others in the re-occupation of Greece, following the withdrawal of the Axis forces in late1944.

Throughout the War, manpower deficiencies in the Army dictated that many of the UK and overseas squadrons be disbanded and the personnel transferred to the Army. Despite this, the Regiment was able to deploy squadrons across the width and breadth of the Mediterranean theatre while preparing for Operation OVERLORD in North-West Europe.

Defeat into Victory

The Japanese had swept across Malaya, Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies, and into Burma in 1942. RAF Regiment gunners were present in small numbers but by 1943, they had been drawn together at the RAF Regiment Depot at Secunderabad in India to receive specialist training in airfield defence, developing strong esprit de corps. By late1943, six field squadrons and a number of LAA flights were deployed to RAF airfields, wireless and radar stations, playing vital roles in the battles in the Arakan of Burma and at Imphal, on India's north-eastern frontier.

The squadrons moved forward with General Slim's unstoppable 14th Army from November 1944, in the advance on Rangoon. By May 1945, the RAF Regiment had some thirty squadrons deployed, with their greatest battle honour being that for the defence of Meiktila airfield. The isolated airfield was the only source of air supply to Slim's mechanised forces and the capture of this key Japanese logistics and supply base was the masterstroke of the campaign.

Following the Japanese surrender in August 1945, those squadrons were deployed across Malaya, Singapore, Siam, Netherlands East Indies, French Indochina, Hong Kong and Japan to take the surrender of thousands of enemy troops and assist in the repatriation of Allied prisoners of war.

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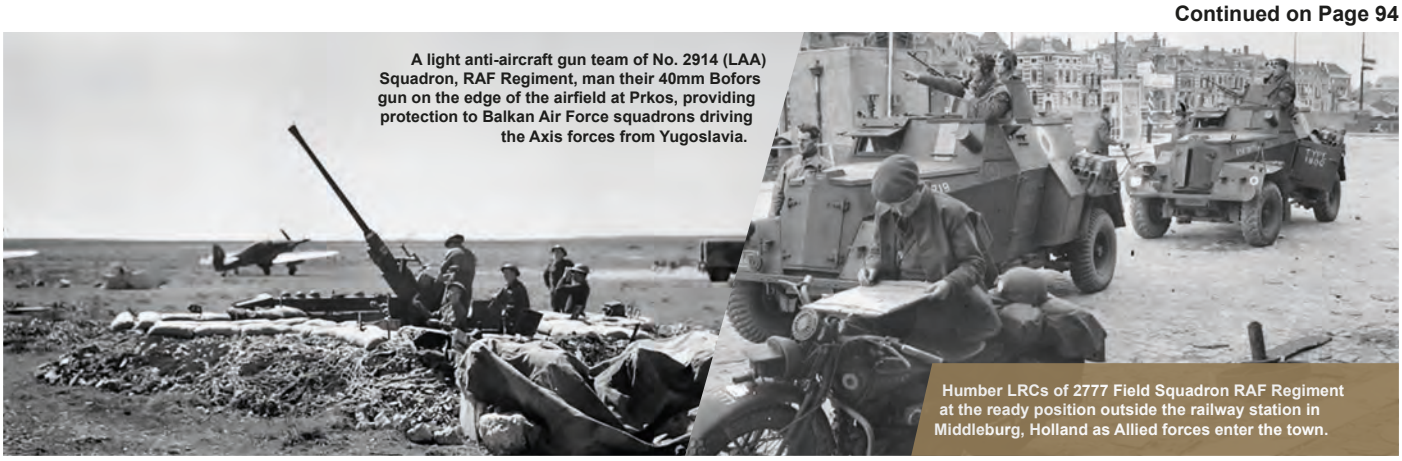


A light anti-aircraft gun team of No. 2914 (LAA) Squadron, RAF Regiment, man their 40mm Bofors gun on the edge of the airfield at Prkos, providing protection to Balkan Air Force squadrons driving the Axis forces from Yugoslavia.

Humber LRCs of 2777 Field Squadron RAF Regiment at the ready position outside the railway station in Middleburg, Holland as Allied forces enter the town.

COMMEMORATING THOSE OF THE

ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT

BATTLE HONOURS

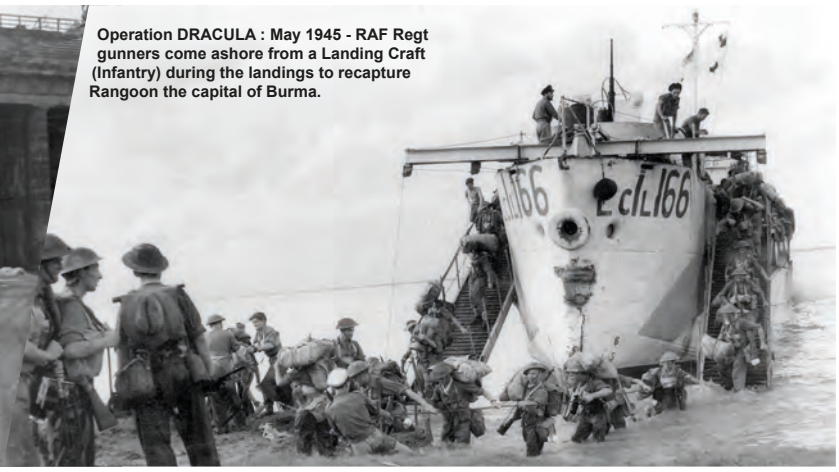
KURDISTAN 1922 - 1924
IRAQ 1923 - 1925
TRANSJORDAN 1924
KURDISTAN 1930 - 1931
PALESTINE 1936 - 1939
HOME DEFENCE 1940 - 1945
EGYPT & LIBYA 1940 - 1943
HABBANIYA
SYRIA 1941
IRAQ 1941
EL ALAMEIN
NORTH AFRICA 1942 - 1943
ARAKAN 1942 - 1944
SOUTH-EAST EUROPE 1944 - 1945
GUSTAV LINE
GOTHIC LINE
SICILY 1943
ITALY 1943 - 1945
NORMANDY 1944
MANIPUR 1944
BURMA 1944 - 1945
FRANCE & GERMANY 1944 - 1945
SOUTH ATLANTIC 1982
GULF 1991
AFGHANSTAN 2001 - 2014
IRAQ 2003
IRAQ 2003 - 2011

WHO FOUGHT WITH DISTINCTION IN EVERY WORLD WAR II THEATRE OF OPERATION

and those who paid the Ultimate Sacrifice

Sponsored by the Centurion Fund of the RAF Regiment
and the Executive Council of the Corps Memorial Garden.

An RAF Regiment Humber Light Recce Car at the Brandenburg Gate.



Operation DRACULA : May 1945 - RAF Regt gunners come ashore from a Landing Craft (Infantry) during the landings to recapture Rangoon the capital of Burma.

Normandy

The RAF Regiment armoured, rifle and LAA squadrons landed on D Day from D+1, in Normandy for Operation OVERLORD. They successfully defended the newly established airfields in the bridgehead from air and ground attack as well as carrying out mine-lifting, rearming and refuelling of aircraft, and armed escort duties.

By the end of August 1944, the Regiment strength in France increased to nineteen wings, eighteen LAA, eight rifle and four armoured squadrons. Here they performed valiantly in escorting Air Technical Intelligence Teams to capture enemy airfields, radar installations and V1 and V2 rocket launch sites.

The threat to the United Kingdom from flying bomb attacks first became clear in 1943 and, as a consequence, plans were prepared for the defence of the main cities. The Regiment deployed 52 of their Bofors L40/60-equipped LAA squadrons which formed a substantial part of the light guns belt earmarked for what became Operation DIVER. The operation lasted from lateJune to earlyOctober 1944, when the advance of the Allied Armies in North-West Europe had effectively negated the air threat.

North West Europe 'Breakout'

Following the Allied breakout from the Normandy beachhead in August 1944, RAF Regiment squadrons were in the vanguard as they moved to capture airfields. The Regiment moved with the Allied forces in the liberation of the major capitals, with an RAF Regiment armoured squadron being the first British unit into Paris, alongside the Maquis.

During the harsh winter of 1944, the Regiment rifle squadrons were placed temporarily under the command of the British and Canadian armies and fought alongside the armoured and infantry divisions in the front lines.

In November 1944, RAF Regiment became the first ever ground unit to shoot down a jet aircraft from the ground, when a Messerschmitt Me 262 was destroyed by Bofors fire.

On New Year's Day 1945, the Luftwaffe launched up to 800 aircraft on a final and largely futile strike, known as Operation BODENPLATTE, on the Allied airfields. Some 335 aircraft attacked 11 RAF airfields defended by Regiment LAA squadrons; they took a heavy toll on the attackers by shooting down 43 and damaging 28 aircraft.

Battle of The Bulge

When the German forces launched their Ardennes offensive in late 1944, in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge, three RAF Regiment squadrons were screening forward observation and radar units crucial for early warning of air attack. These squadrons formed an effective rear-guard and ensured that the RAF units reached safety with their valuable and largely top secret equipment.

Mopping Up

In the north of Europe, alongside elements of the 1st Airborne Division, RAF Regiment units were some of the first to land in Norway, where they rapidly occupied former Luftwaffe airfields. By March 1945, the main mission of the Regiment was to advance ahead of the Army to seize Luftwaffe installations and airfield equipment before they could be destroyed or damaged, either by the enemy or Allied ground forces.

Accordingly, in early May 1945, nine Regiment Task Groups passed through the Army's forward edge of the battle area and moved into Schleswig-Holstein to occupy airfields up to the Danish border. Fifteen airfields were seized and the Regiment took the surrender of no less than 50,000 German troops along with numerous senior commanders, including Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, Hitler's successor as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

By VE Day there were 74 RAF Regiment squadrons in North-West Europe, deployed on airfields throughout the British occupied zone, later becoming part of the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO).

In Every Place

The RAF Regiment fought most effectively in all the major campaigns of the War and, by 1945, had become a crucial component of the Royal Air Force, thus ensuring the Regiment's continued existence – and essential need - to the present day.

Gunners of a RAF Regiment patrol cover the approaches to a kampong (village) in Java during a systematic search for weapons and ammunition held by Indonesian nationalists.

Malaya 1945 – Gunners of 2941 Field Squadron RAF Regiment collect abandoned Japanese weapons at Prai Power Station, Port Butterworth, Malaya. The collection of arms and equipment was vital to stop them falling into the hands of nationalist fighters or criminal gangs.

GUERNSEY STAMPS AND COLLECTABLES

GUERNSEY POST

Guernsey Post Commemorates 80 Years of Freedom

The 80th Anniversary Liberation Stamp Issue – A Tribute to Courage and Resilience

In 2025, Guernsey marks a solemn and historic milestone: the 80th anniversary of Liberation Day, commemorating the island's freedom from German Occupation during the Second World War. The Channel Islands hold a unique place in British history as the only part of the British Isles occupied by German forces, who arrived on 30 June 1940. For five long years, Guernsey's people endured evacuation, fortification, hardship, and quiet resistance – until freedom returned on 9 May 1945. To honour this extraordinary chapter, Guernsey Post proudly presents a new commemorative stamp set, chronicling key moments from 1940 to 1945 through authentic artefacts held in the island's museum collections.

Each stamp tells a powerful story:

69p: A homemade toy plane, crafted during occupation, symbolises hope and resilience.
92p: A deportation mug, engraved in a German internment camp, records the journey of Channel Islanders into captivity.
£1.37: A 'V for Victory' pin badge, created in secret, reveals the bravery of those who resisted.
£1.47: A Red Cross food parcel, lifeline during the island's darkest days.
£1.81: A liberation brass pin, gifted to Guernsey's children who endured the occupation.
£1.90: And finally, the Royal visit of June 1945, marking recovery and a hopeful future.

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BATTLE OF THE NORTH CAPE

The last battle of the big-gun capital ships

The Battle of the North Cape, fought on December 26, 1943, was a pivotal naval engagement during World War II. It marked the last battle between British and German big-gun capital ships and played a crucial role in securing Allied Arctic convoys. The battle saw the German battleship *Scharnhorst* attempting to intercept Allied convoys carrying vital supplies to the Soviet Union. However, the Royal Navy, led by HMS *Duke of York*, ambushed and sank *Scharnhorst*, effectively eliminating the German surface raider threat in the Arctic. This victory strengthened British naval dominance and ensured safer passage for Arctic convoys, which were essential for supplying the Soviet war effort against Nazi Germany. It was also one of the last major battles involving battleships, as naval warfare increasingly shifted towards aircraft carriers and submarines.

The *Scharnhorst* sailed from Langfiord in Norway with five destroyers on the afternoon of Christmas Day, 1943, to attack convoy JW55B which had been detected south-west of Bear Island. The close covering force with the convoy were the British cruisers *Belfast, Sheffield and Norfolk*. Covering the convoy, something over 100 miles to the south-west, were the *King George V battleship, the Duke of York* (C-in-C Home Fleet, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser), the cruiser *Jamaica* and four destroyers.

Intelligence that *Scharnhorst* might be at Sea reached Admiral Fraser in the early hours of the 26th. The tactical problems facing the British were that the *Scharnhorst* could out-gun the cruisers and outrun the *Duke of York*. Although Fraser did not know her exact location, he could make fairly accurate judgments. *Scharnhorst* was, in fact, making for a position ahead of the convoy from which she could commence a sweep with destroyers to the south-west. A gale was blowing from the south-west with snow squalls and bitter cold, but the German ships were able to make 25kt to the north. They remained closed up at Defence Watches throughout the overnight passage. Lookouts were alert.

The German Admiral Bey, did not expect too much from his 'Seetakt' radar. He also appeared to underestimate the potential of British radar, which was to play a key part in the action. In addition, Bey had no intelligence of the presence of the *Duke of York* in the area. At 07.30 on 26 December, Bey detached his destroyers to sweep to the south-west for the convoy. They lost touch with *Scharnhorst* and played no further part in the day's events.

At 0840, on 26 December the *Belfast* gained radar contact on the *Scharnhorst* to the south-east of the convoy. The *Belfast* and the *Norfolk* closed and at 0921 sighted the *Scharnhorst* and the *Belfast* opened fire with starshell, completely surprising the *Scharnhorst*. Five minutes later the *Norfolk* engaged with her 8in guns. Bey ordered a turn, away from the cruisers, to the south, correctly estimating that the convoy lay to the north-west. The *Scharnhorst* attempted to work around the cruisers in order to close the convoy again. However, *Norfolk* had obtained two hits in the first engagement, one of which carried away the forward 'Seetakt' radar, making *Scharnhorst* blind. Admiral Burnett, in command of the cruisers, decided not to shadow the *Scharnhorst*, but closed the convoy to cover against any subsequent moves by the German ship. Meanwhile, enemy movements were being reported to Admiral Fraser on the *Duke of York*. It was an important feature of this battle that communications between the various British ships worked well.

Dawn was approaching at 1100, with only 2 hours of daylight to come. The SW gale was driving low cloud which kept what little light there was to a bare twilight. Towards noon the *Norfolk* had a brief contact at 13 miles, and then the *Belfast* at 15 miles to the east. The cruisers were just 9 miles ahead of the convoy. They turned towards and sighted the *Scharnhorst* at 1221. In another brief skirmish the *Scharnhorst* was hit again, but the *Norfolk* was hit by two 11in shells at 1233, a shell passing through X turret which necessitated the magazine to be flooded, and another shell put her radar out of action. The *Sheffield* suffered some damage from splinters. Bey broke off at 1241 and decided to terminate the operation against the convoy and return to Norwegian waters, then only some 9 hours steaming away. As the news was passed amongst the *Scharnhorst's* men, an air of relaxation descended on-board.

However, the cruisers followed the German ship at 28 knots in driving rain and snow shadowing

Gun crews of ***HMS DUKE OF YORK*** under the ship's 14 inch guns at Scapa Flow after the sinking of the German battleship ***SCHARNHORST.*** Copyright © IWM (A 21168)

by radar at long range, passing frequent reports by Wireless Telegraph to the *Duke of York*. The shadowing operation by the cruisers was a classic piece of cruiser work.

Meanwhile, on the *Duke of York* Fraser's staff had a clear picture of the situation and appreciated that they should be able to intercept the *Scharnhorst* at 1715 before she reached the Norwegian coast. On the Admiral's Bridge was the Admiral himself, the Flag Lieutenant, Fleet Torpedo Officer and Fleet Signals Officer. The latter had the important job of ensuring that the W/T links between the various British ships functioned smoothly. The Plot was immediately behind the Admiral's Bridge, the forerunner of the modern Operations Room; this was controlled by the Chief of Staff. All information coming in from the Bridge Wireless Office, which was immediately adjacent, was plotted on the plotting table giving the Chief of Staff a clear picture of the situation. Also in the Plot was a new PPI (Plan Position Indicator) display for the *Duke of York*'s centimetric radar.

British destroyers were placed to the west to prevent the *Scharnhorst* breaking back to the convoy, while the cruisers followed the enemy south. The *Sheffield* had engine trouble, reduced speed and took no further part. *Norfolk* had to fight a fire and did not rejoin for an hour, leaving only the *Belfast* in touch with *Scharnhorst*. This put the *Belfast* in a vulnerable position, because not only was it essential that she did not lose the German ship but also, should the *Scharnhorst* turn on her, the *Belfast* would be heavily out-gunned. However, Admiral Bey held on for the safety of the Norwegian fiords, whilst the *Duke of York* headed her off. With both British forces were flotillas of destroyers who would play an essential part.

At 1617 the *Duke of York* obtained radar contact, at 45,500 yards to the north-east, and then Fraser knew he could bring the German ship to action. By 1632 the *Duke of York*'s gunnery radar had acquired the *Scharnhorst* at 15 miles. He chose to hold on to close the range before opening fire. At 1640 the *Belfast* 10 miles astern, was ordered to illuminate the *Scharnhorst* with star shells. However, the *Scharnhorst* could not be seen from the *Duke of York*.

The latter then fired her own star shell which burst precisely beyond the *Scharnhorst*, silhouetting her against the pale light, her guns trained fore-and-aft, completely caught by surprise. The *Duke of York* opened fire at 1650 with her 14in and obtained a hit with her first broadside on the *Scharnhorst's* 'Anton' turret, and with her third salvo. The *Jamaica* opened fire two minutes later. The *Scharnhorst* replied using only 'Bruno' and 'Ceasar' turrets, and without the benefit of radar to find her target; she could only fire at gun flashes in the dark. Nevertheless, her gunnery was accurate.

Admiral Bey quickly appreciated the nature of the threat which had appeared out of the dark to the south of him. But he knew he still had one tactical advantage - the *Scharnhorst's* speed. Whatever his adversary was, he could outrun any British capital ship, so he turned to the north and then east and did, indeed, start to open the range. At intervals she would turn south to fire a broadside at the *Jamaica*. Fraser saw that the range was slowly opening and realised that the *Scharnhorst* might slip from his grasp.

There was little he could do unless the German ship could be slowed down. The *Norfolk* rejoined the *Belfast* and engaged with her 8in guns and the destroyers crept ahead to reach an attacking position. The *Belfast* and the *Norfolk* ceased fire at 1712, and the *Jamaica* at 1742 when the range had opened to 9 miles. The *Duke of York* also fell astern and ceased fire at 1820, however one of her last shells hit the *Scharnhorst* no1 boiler room at 1820 and her speed reduced to 20kt.

By 1840 destroyers had closed to 5 miles and began firing torpedoes. The Scorpion achieved a hit and in turning placed the Savage and the Saumarez in a good position and 3 further hits were made. The damage from these reduced her speed further and left only one turret firing. At 1901 the destroyers withdrew and the *Duke of York* and *Jamaica* reopened fire at 10,400 yards. Hit after hit was achieved and *Scharnhorst* was on fire. She made a last signal "We shall fight to the last shell. Hail the Fuehrer". Finally, the destroyers, together with the *Belfast* and the *Jamaica* closed and fired torpedoes from close range.

The *Duke of York* withdrew when all that could be seen of *Scharnhorst* was a dull red glow through a thick pall of smoke. She was listing, coming to a stop and with fires in her hanger and two magazines yet was still trying to fire her aft turret. The *Jamaica* fired another three torpedoes and two explosions were heard.

The German Battleship *Scharnhorst.*

At 1945 she sank slowly by her bows, with her propellers still turning slowly as she rolled right over to starboard. The destroyers stopped but could only pick up 36 of her crew out of a complement of 1,968. She had been hit by at least 13 x 14in shells, 12 x 8in or 6in and by 11 torpedoes. The *Duke of York* fired 443 rounds in 52 broadsides. All the ships of the convoy arrived safely. The *Scharnhorst*, 31,000 ton German-Cruiser, with a main armament of nine 11inch guns, was the pride of the German fleet.

The Battle of the North Cape had a lasting impact on naval warfare, particularly in shaping post-WWII strategies and fleet compositions. It reinforced several key lessons:

Decline of Battleships: The sinking of *Scharnhorst* demonstrated the vulnerability of battleships against coordinated attacks by smaller, faster ships and radar-guided fire-power. This accelerated the shift towards aircraft carriers and submarines as dominant naval assets.

Radar and Technological Superiority: The Royal Navy's effective use of radar to track and engage *Scharnhorst* highlighted the growing importance of electronic warfare and surveillance in naval engagements.

Convoy Protection Strategies: The battle reaffirmed the necessity of strong escort fleets for merchant convoys, influencing Cold War-era naval doctrines, particularly in the defence of supply lines against submarine threats.

Essentially, the battle marked the end of the battleship era, paving the way for modern naval warfare centred around air power, missile systems, and stealth technology.

FROM THE EDGE OF THE EMPIRE

The Falklands' Gift of Wings

X4616 'Falkland Islands IV' attached to 92 Squadron RAF

The ten Spitfires, all the Mk1a variant, donated by the Falkland Islands first flew in October and November 1940.

All bore the name 'Falkland Islands' below the cockpit

X4614 Falkland Islands (FI)I assigned to 66 Sqn RAF / 92 Sqn RAF

X4615 FI II assigned to 616 Sqn RAF / 602 Sqn RAF / No. 61 Operational Training Unit / No. 121 Eagle Squadron RAF (composed of volunteers from the United States) / 322 Sqn RAF / 164 Sqn RAF / 808 Sqn RAF / 718 Sqn RAF

X4617 FI III assigned to 616 Sqn RAF / No. 308 (Polish) RAF

X4616 FI IV assigned to 92 Sqn RAF

X4622 FI V assigned to 222 Sqn RAF

X4619 FI VI assigned to 602 Sqn RAF

X4620 FI VII assigned to 611 Sqn RAF

X4642 FI VIII assigned to 609 Sqn RAF / No. 61 Operational Training Unit

X4613FI IX assigned to 603 Sqn RAF / 266 Sqn RAF

X4643 FI X assigned to 72 Sqn RAF / 485 Sqn RNZAF, the first New Zealand fighter squadron formed in the UK

In the vast sweep of the Second World War, it's easy to overlook the quiet corners of the map. But in the South Atlantic, 8,000 miles from London, the people of the Falkland Islands made a gesture that soared far beyond their windswept shores. With a population of just over 2,000, the islanders raised enough money to donate ten Supermarine Spitfires to the Royal Air Force - a feat of generosity and patriotism that remains one of the most remarkable contributions from any British colony.

In 1940, as Britain stood alone, the Falklands' Legislative Council voted to allocate £50,000 - a staggering sum for the time - from the colony's reserves to support the war effort.

Additional funds were raised through local initiatives, including the Fellowship of the Bellows, a global fundraising movement that rallied support for the RAF. Each of the ten aircraft bore the name **"Falkland Islands"** beneath the cockpit, a quiet but powerful reminder that even the most remote outposts of the Empire stood shoulder to shoulder with the mother country.

Tragic History

On 2 March 1941, **X4613 'Falkland Islands IX'** was flown by Flight Lieutenant Sydney Howarth Bazley on an operational patrol. Tragically, the aircraft failed to return. It crashed at Gedney Hill, Lincolnshire, and Flt Lt Bazley was killed in the incident. His loss was one of many suffered by 266 Squadron during the early years of the war, as they transitioned from defensive patrols to more aggressive operations over occupied Europe.

X4642 'Falkland Islands VIII' was flown by Sergeant George Douglas Jones, a 20-year-old pilot from the Isle of Man. Based at RAF Rednal in Shropshire, Jones was undergoing training on 5 August 1942, his aircraft entered a spin and broke apart mid-air over the hills of Denbighshire, Wales. Though he bailed out, he was gravely injured and died days later in hospital.

Decades later, the wreckage of his Spitfire - still bearing the "Falkland Islands" name - was discovered by a young air cadet. That discovery sparked a renewed effort to honour both the pilot and the aircraft's extraordinary origin.

X4614, on 16 January 1943, while assigned to No. 58 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Grangemouth in Scotland, X4614 was involved in a training accident. During a formation flight in poor weather, three Spitfires - including X4614 - flew into cloud and subsequently crashed into King's Seat Hill in the Ochil Hills, Clackmannanshire. The pilot of X4614, Sergeant Gordon Murray Duda of the Royal Canadian Air Force, was killed. He was just 20 years old. The crash claimed the lives of two pilots and seriously injured a third, who was found nearly two days later by a shepherd, having crawled through snow in search of help. X4614 bore the name **"Falkland Islands I"**, making her the first of the ten aircraft funded by the colony.

In 2009, a memorial was erected at the crash site by local air cadets and mountain rescue volunteers, and the dedication ceremony included a flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight - a fitting tribute to both the pilot and the aircraft's unique origin

Legacy in Aluminium and Memory

The Falklands' Spitfires served not only as instruments of war but as airborne ambassadors of solidarity. They flew in training units and operational squadrons, their names a constant reminder that Britain's fight was shared by its farthest flung citizens.

Today, their legacy lives on in memorials, in archival records, and in the quiet pride of a community that gave so much with so little. In a war defined by industrial might and mass mobilisation, the story of the Falkland Islands' Spitfires is a reminder that history is also shaped by small places with big hearts.

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A COMMON CAUSE

The Commonwealth contribution to Victory

On the outbreak of the Second World War there was little doubt that the Dominions would be ready to fight against Fascism, although the South African parliament agreed to do so by majority of only 13, and one Dominion, Eire, which refused to recognise it's status as such, remained neutral. Victory in Europe and the Far East was accomplished at great sacrifice by members of The Commonwealth.

Australia

On the outbreak of the Second World War the prime minister of Australia, Sir Robert Menzies, immediately announced that its armed forces would support the Allied war effort. This policy continued under John Curtin, the leader of the Australian Labour Party, who gained power in 1941. Compulsory military service was introduced with the understanding that conscripts would be required to serve only in Australia and it's territories.

Recruitment for the three main services took place and concerned about only having 164 combat aircraft efforts were made to supplement this force. Two divisions (6th and 7th) of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) under Lieutenant-General Thomas Blamey were sent to Palestine for training. These soldiers were expected to be sent to France but after its surrender in June 1940 they were sent to North Africa instead.

Australian troops took part in the campaigns for Egypt and formed the bulk of the garrison at Tobruk under Lieutenant General Leslie Morshead. They also fought in Greece, Crete and Syria in 1941.

About 560,000 members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) served overseas during the Second World War. The Australian Air Force saw action over Europe and the Navy fought with the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and the Sydney sunk the Italian cruiser Bartolomeo Colleoni.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the invasion of New Guinea, the Australian armed forces worked closely with those of the United States under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, who had established his headquarters in Brisbane. John Curtin announced that "without inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that (from now on) Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom". The Japanese Air Force made 14 air raids on Darwin in early 1942.

Later the Japanese mounted raids against towns in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. In May 1942 Japanese submarines made an unsuccessful attempt to enter Sydney Harbour.

John Curtin began to fear that the Japanese Army would attempt to invade Australia and against the wishes of Winston Churchill recalled two divisions of the Australian Imperial Force from the Middle East. Australian forces played a major role in defeating the Japanese in New Guinea, Borneo and Malaya. Australia suffered 21,000 dead and 58,000 other casualties.

Canada

On 10th September, 1939, the Canadian parliament declared war against Nazi Germany, but refused to send non-volunteers to Europe.

The Canadian prime minister, Mackenzie King worked closely with the United States in the defence of North America. In December 1939 the 1st Canadian Division left for Britain. They were followed later by two other infantry divisions, two armoured divisions and two armoured brigades.

In 1941 two Canadian battalions were sent to the defence of Hong Kong but they were captured by the invading Japanese Army in December 1941. Of these, 246 died as a result of harsh treatment while prisoners of war.

The Royal Canadian Air Force contributed a squadron during the Battle of Britain and 48 other Canadian squadrons fought during the war. Canada also provided facilities and personnel for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan which produced 131,553 airmen for Commonwealth countries.

Canadian soldiers were used on the raid on Dieppe in France in August 1942. The attempt to take and hold the port was a disaster and 3,367 out of the 4,963 Canadians who took part were killed, wounded or captured. The 3rd Canadian Division and second armoured brigade took part in the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. The Canadians suffered heavily casualties during the fighting at Pas de Calais, Caen and Falaise. They fought throughout the Netherlands and participated in the recapture of Antwerp. After the surrender of Germany in April 1945, a Canadian occupation force remained in the country until 1946.

New Zealand

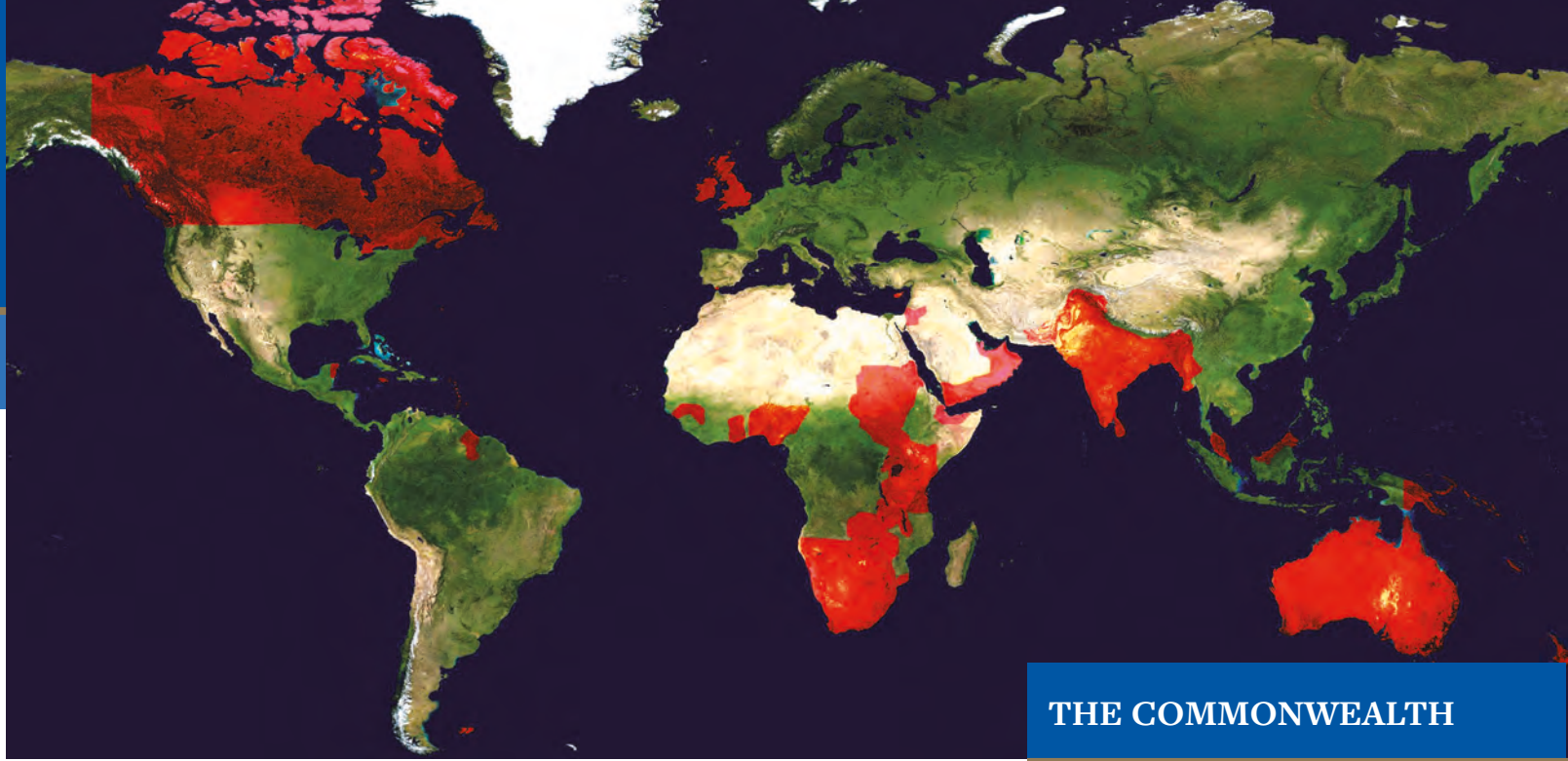
In September 1939 the government of New Zealand joined Britain by declaring war on Germany. Two volunteer divisions were sent to Middle East for training and one of these was deployed to fight in Egypt. New Zealanders also fought in Greece, Crete, Italy and the Soloman Islands.

More than 7,000 New Zealanders served at sea during the Second World War of which 451 were killed and 134 were wounded. The Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) helped to train over 12,000 aircrew for the Royal Air Force as part of the Empire Training Scheme. Over 10,950 men from New Zealand served with the RAF and the RNZAF. Of these, 3285 were killed during the war. By September 1942 there were over 150,000 people from New Zealand in the armed forces. Total wartime casualties were 11,625 dead and 17,000 wounded.

India

On the outbreak of the Second World War the Indian Army numbered 160,000 men. The army had no tanks or heavy field artillery and had very

Indian Soldiers at Dunkirk, nearly 300 soldiers were evacuated. They arrived in France on December 26, 1939.



little air support. Over the next five years a total of two million served in the army and took part in the campaigns in North Africa, Italy and Burma. Some political figures demanded a massive civil disobedience campaign during the war. The leaders of the Congress Party were in a difficult position.

They wanted to make use of Britain's weakness, but did not want to do anything that would help a German victory. A compromise was drawn up where people would be selected to commit individual acts of civil disobedience. These people were arrested and placed in prison without trial. By May, 1941, over 2,500 people had been arrested. In 1942, Japan was able to take control of Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. It appeared possible that Japan would soon be launching an invasion of India.

Stafford Cripps, a socialist and supporter of Indian Independence, was sent by Winston Churchill to meet the Congress leaders. In exchange for their support, the British government offered reform of the role of the Viceroy and a commitment that India would be granted dominion status once the war with Germany was over. After their experiences of the First World War Congress leaders were unwilling to comply with the government demands in return for the promise of a reward in the distant future.

Although the Congress leaders liked Stafford Cripps, they did not trust Winston Churchill, who had been one of the strongest opponents of Indian Independence during the 1920s and 30s. He was particularly hostile to Gandhi whom he described as a "nauseating, seditious Middle Temple lawyer... posing as a fakir (holy man)". In August 1942, the Congress Party endorsed a new Quit India campaign. Mahatma Gandhi was chosen to organise the campaign. Within hours of the announcement, Gandhi and his fellow leaders were arrested and put in prison. Here they stayed without trial for the next two years.

During the war Subhas Chandra Bose formed a Indian National Army to fight against the British. Drawn mainly from soldiers of the Indian Army that were captured by the Japanese Army in the early stages of the war. About 7,000 of these soldiers fought under Bose against the British Army at Imphal and Kohima.

South Africa

On the 6th September 1939 the South African 'Herren Volk Democracy' declared war on Nazi Germany. South Africa entered the war against Germany deeply divided. South Africans' played a vital role in all three services. 400 Allied convoys carrying six million men used South African ports during the war and 13,000 ships were repaired. The first SA Div and 2nd SA Tanks Corps fought the East African Campaign before moving to the Middle East in 1941. There were nearly 60,000 South African troops in Egypt. 10,722 became PoWs when Tobruk fell in June 1942.

In September 1939, the South African Army numbered 3,353 regulars. These were supplemented by 14,631 men of the Active Citizen Force (ACF) which gave peace time training to volunteers and in time of war would form the main body of the army.

Pre-war plans did not anticipate that the army would fight outside southern Africa and it was trained and equipped for bush warfare. Changes were initiated after the Italian conquest of Abyssinia in 1936 and the 27 battalions of the ACF were organised into nine brigade groups.

The brigade group was the basic South African field formation capable of independent operations. Mirroring contemporary British practice, each brigade of three infantry battalions was allocated its own artillery, engineers and other ancillary arms. However South Africa's military aspired to greater things and in late September 1939, the Chief of Staff, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, proposed the formation of a Mobile Field Force, made up of two infantry divisions (each of three infantry brigades), a mounted brigade and an armoured regiment. Together with supporting artillery and coastal defence forces, the requirement was for 140,000 men. Although not formally accepted, the proposal set the pattern for subsequent mobilisation and force structure.

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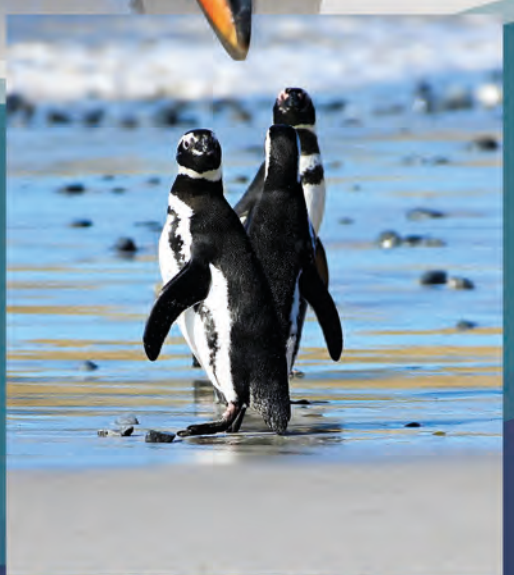

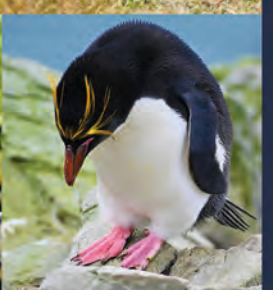

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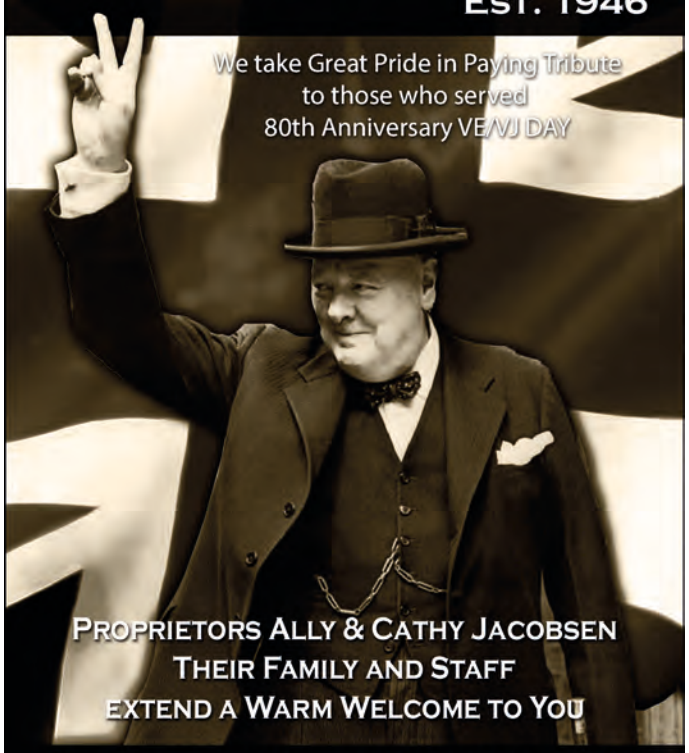

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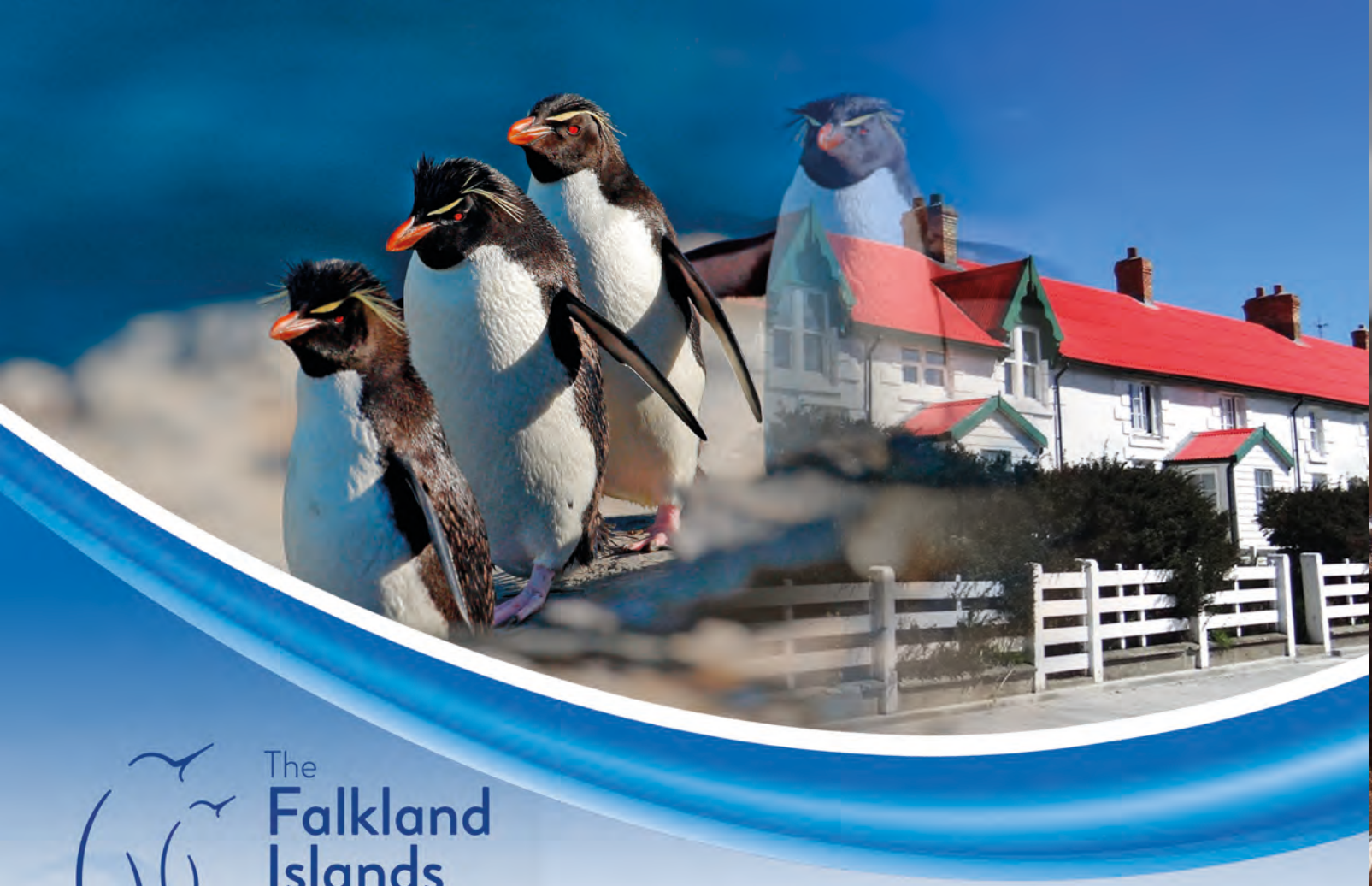

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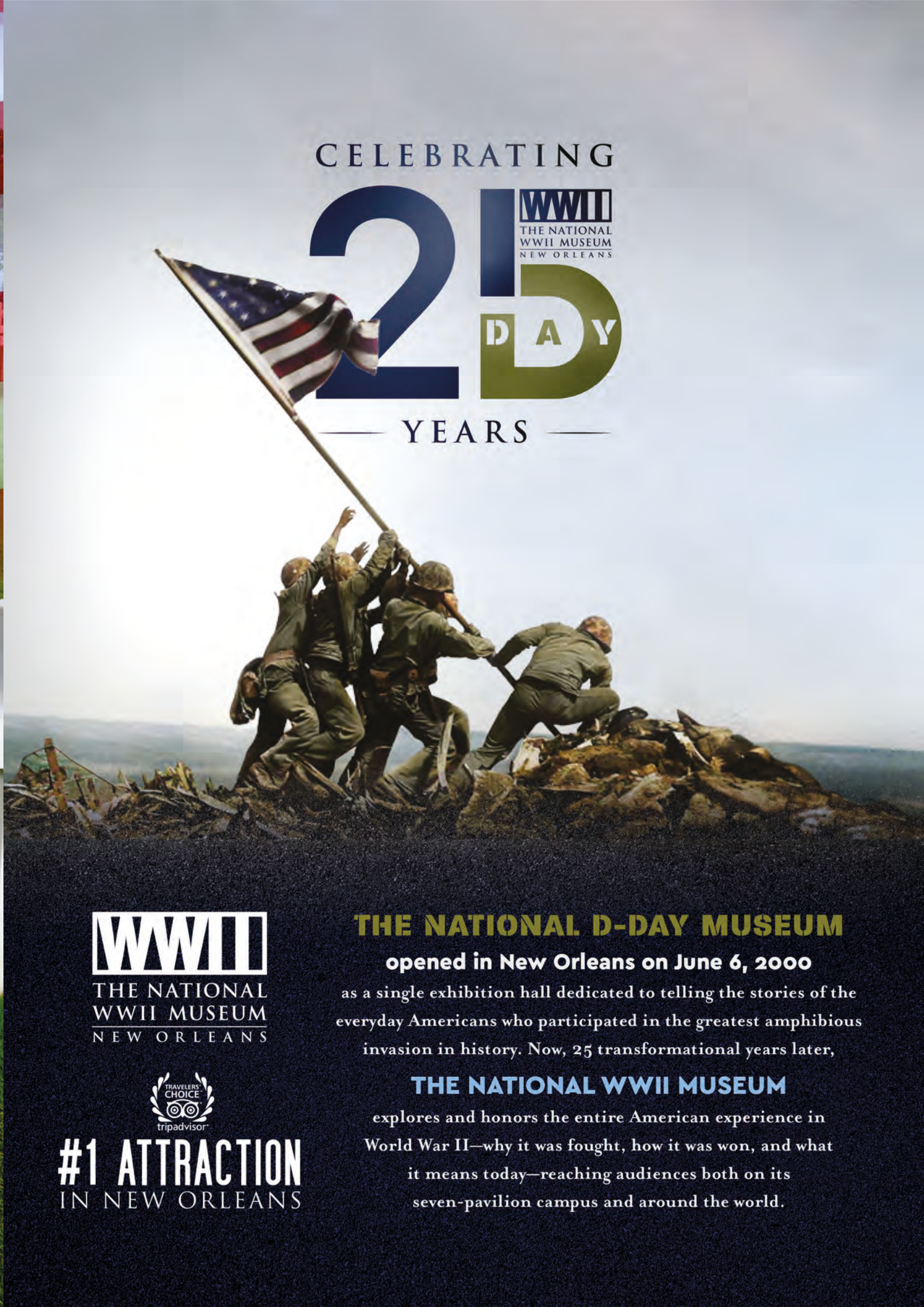
General Mark W. Clark
Chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission, 1969-1984



WWII
THE NATIONAL
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as a single exhibition hall dedicated to telling the stories of the everyday Americans who participated in the greatest amphibious invasion in history. Now, 25 transformational years later,

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FOR VALOUR & SERVICE

British Campaign Medals of the Second World War

British campaign medals are honours presented to members of the British Armed Forces, Allied personnel, and eligible civilians who took part in designated military operations.

These awards serve as recognition for service in theatres of war, operational zones, or areas of direct support.

For instance, the Defence Medal was awarded to those who contributed to the protection of the United Kingdom during World War II, including members of the Home Guard, Civil Defence services, and non-combatant military personnel operating under threat of enemy action.

The Atlantic Star, meanwhile, was conferred upon those who served at sea in the treacherous waters of the Atlantic between 1939 and 1945, a campaign vital to securing Britain's maritime lifeline against the persistent threat of German U-boats.

1

1939 - 1945 STAR

Originally 1939-43 Star. Instituted on 8 July 1943 for award to British and Commonwealth forces for service in the Second World War. Two clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon, Battle of Britain and Bomber Command.

2

ATLANTIC STAR

Instituted in May 1945 for award to British Commonwealth forces who took part in the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous campaign of the Second World War. Two clasps were instituted and could be worn on the medal ribbon, Air Crew Europe and France and Germany.

6

PACIFIC STAR

Instituted in May 1945 for award to British and Commonwealth forces who served in the Pacific Campaign from 1941 to 1945, during the Second World War.
One clasp, Burma, was instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon.

7

BURMA STAR

Instituted in May 1945 for award to British and Commonwealth forces who served in the Burma Campaign from 1941 to 1945, during the Second World War. One clasp, Pacific, was instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon.

8

ITALY STAR

Instituted in May 1945 for award to British Commonwealth forces who served in the Italian Campaign from 1943 to 1945, during the Second World War.

3

ARCTIC STAR

A retrospective award and Instituted on 19 December 2012 for award to British Commonwealth forces who served on the Arctic Convoys north of the Arctic Circle, during the Second World War. Unique as awarded with a dead monarch's cypher.

4

AIR CREW EUROPE STAR

instituted in May 1945 for award to British and Commonwealth air crews who participated in operational flights over Europe from bases in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. Two clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon: Atlantic and France and Germany.

5

AFRICA STAR

Instituted on 8 July 1943 for award to British and Commonwealth forces who served in North Africa between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943 during the Second World War. Three clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon: North Africa 1942–43, 8th Army and 1st Army.

9

FRANCE & GERMANY STAR

Instituted in May 1945 for award to British Commonwealth forces who served in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands or Germany and adjacent sea areas between 6 June 1944 and 8 May 1945, during the Second World War One clasp, 'Atlantic', could be worn on the medal ribbon.

10

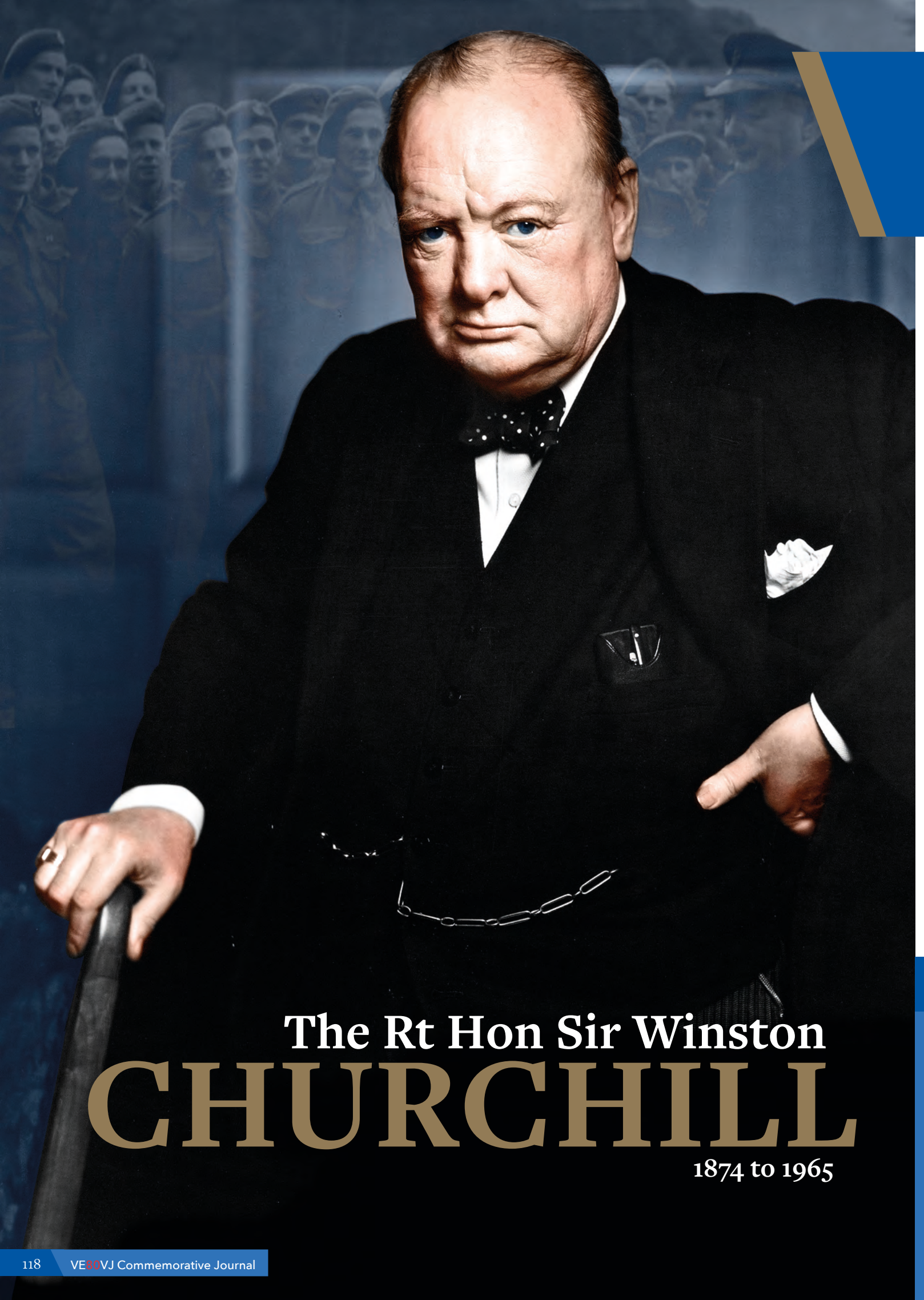
DEFENCE MEDAL

Instituted in May 1945, to be awarded to citizens of the British Commonwealth for both non-operational military and certain types of civilian war service during the Second World War.

11

WAR MEDAL 1939-1945

Instituted by the United Kingdom on 16 August 1945, for award to citizens of the British Commonwealth who had served full-time in the Armed Forces or the Merchant Navy for at least 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.



The Rt Hon Sir Winston CHURCHILL

1874 to 1965

SIR WINSTON LEONARD SPENCER CHURCHILL was born on the 30th of November, 1874 at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, the eldest son of Lord Randolph Churchill and his American wife, and a nephew of the Duke of Marlborough. Despite an undistinguished career at Harrow, he attended the RMA, Sandhurst, before being gazetted to the 4th Hussars. Following service in India and on the North-West Frontier, he took part in the Nile Expeditionary Force in the Sudan in 1898, and was attached to the 21st Lancers when that regiment made its famous mounted charge against the dervishes during the Battle of Omdurman.

As a newspaper correspondent during the Boer War of 1899-1901 he was captured when the armoured train he was travelling in was ambushed and derailed, but later successfully escaped his captors and made an epic journey back to British lines.

He was present at a number of the most famous battles of the campaign, including *Spion Kop*. Churchill entered Parliament as a Conservative MP in 1900 but, finding himself increasingly at odds with the party, in 1904 crossed the floor of the House and joined the Liberal Party, becoming Under-Secretary for the Colonies in 1906 and President of the Board of Trade two years later, in which post he introduced labour exchanges.

Appointed Home Secretary in 1910, he was involved in the Siege of Sidney Street the following year, and not long afterwards changed his post for that of First Lord of the Admiralty, and thereafter worked furiously to prepare the Royal Navy for the war with Germany that he knew must come; he also worked tirelessly on the development and deployment of tanks, an invention for which (as was later officially acknowledged) he was partly responsible.

In 1915 he resigned in the face of blame for the costly failure of the *Dardanelles* and *Gallipoli* operations, and went to France to take command of an infantry battalion on the Western Front. He returned to Britain in 1916 and in 1917 took up the post of Minister of Munitions in the Coalition government now headed by Lloyd George. He was Secretary for War and Air from 1919-21, but in 1924 changed allegiance once more when he was elected to a different constituency as a 'constitutionalist' Conservative; from then until 1929 he served as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

> *"A nation that forgets its past has no future..."*

Without office in the 1930's under Ramsay MacDonald's National government and the succeeding Tory administrations, he increasingly warned from the backbenches of the dangers of German rearmament, of appeasement of the dictators, and of Britain's absolute lack of preparedness for war, referring to the Munich settlement of 1938 as '*a total and unmitigated defeat*'. The fall of Norway in May I940, and the imminent threat to British forces in France and to Britain herself, led to a vote of no confidence in the administration headed by Neville Chamberlain, whom Churchill succeeded as Prime Minister, immediately forming a Coalition government.

Despite the disasters in Belgium and France, victory in the Battle of Britain, followed by successes at sea and in North Africa, helped to stiffen the country's sinews, aided immeasurably by Churchill's leadership and his oratory. His close personal friendship with President Roosevelt ensured American support and, following Japanese and German declarations of war against the USA in December 1941, did much to smooth the often rocky path of inter-Allied co-operation, while his ability both to flatter and to stand up to Stalin promoted a relationship with the Soviet Union that helped to ensure the defeat of the Axis.

After German defeats in North Africa and Russia, and American naval victories over the Japanese in the Pacific, the tide of war began to turn, and Churchill increasingly directed his formidable talents to the total defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan and the maintenance of the Triple Alliance which was to bring that about.

He was not to share in the final triumph, however, in the general election of July 1945, two months after Germany's unconditional surrender, the war-weary British people voted the Labour Party into power, and Churchill handed over the premiership to Clement Attlee.

He remained an untiring leader of the Opposition, while his fame and reputation ensured that he maintained an overwhelming presence on the international stage. In 1951, aged seventy-seven, he became Prime Minister again, resigning in 1955 in favour of the much younger Anthony Eden, although he stayed as a backbencher well into his old age, until failing health forced him to give up his seat in Parliament. He died, full of years and honours, in 1965 and, after a magnificent state funeral, was buried in the graveyard of the tiny parish church close to Blenheim Palace, the house in which he had been born.

The Wicked Wit of Sir Winston Churchill...

"Madam, all babies look like me." Churchill's response to a woman who came up to him and declared that her baby looked just like him.

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson ('Jumbo') C-in-C, Middle East, was selected in September 1943 to take the Greek island of Leros with a comparatively small number of troops. **"This is the time to play high,"** Churchill encouraged him. **"Improvise and dare."** Later he wrote of the General: **'He improvose and dore.'**

Field Marshal Sir William Slim (in a discussion of standard rifles for NATO forces in 1952): **"Well, I suppose we could experiment with a bastard rifle - partly American, partly British."** Churchill: **"Kindly moderate your language - it may be recalled that I am myself partly British, partly American."**

"I do not challenge the honourable gentleman, when the truth leaks out of him from time to time."
One of Churchill's political rivals had just interrupted him with a rebutting fact.

While campaigning in 1900, it is said that the young Churchill was doing a spot of canvassing when one of those he approached exclaimed **"Vote for you? Why I'd rather vote for the Devil!"**

"I understand," Churchill answered. **"But in case your friend is not running, may I count on your support?"**

In one of the many documents that came Churchill's way, a civil servant had gone out of his way to be grammatically correct, and had clumsily avoided ending a sentence with a preposition. Churchill scribbled in the margin: **'This is the sort of English up with which I will not put.'**

"Never trust a man who has not a single redeeming vice".

THE ROYAL FAMILY AT WAR

Through their hard work, courage and show of public concern during the war, the royal family set an example that gained the enduring love and respect of the British people. On 24 August 1939, as war clouds gathered over Europe, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth broke off their summer holiday at Balmoral to return to London. The two Princesses, 14-year old Elizabeth and nine-year old Margaret, were left in Scotland on the secure and secluded royal estate at Birkhall, near Balmoral. When war broke out on 3 September, King George VI, the unassuming and dutiful younger brother who had succeeded Edward VIII in 1936, went to great pains to maintain an air of calm and certainty.

At 6pm on the first evening of the war, he made his broadcast to the Empire. Struggling bravely with his stammer, the King concluded: "There may be dark days ahead and war can no longer be confined to the battlefield, but we can only do the right as we see right and reverently commit our cause to God. If, one and all, we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then with God's help we shall prevail. May he bless and keep us all".

The royal family quickly slipped into the austere routines of war and the household was pared down to meet the demands of rationing. At the royal estate at Sandringham in Norfolk the golf course was ploughed as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign and the house closed. On their rare visits to the estate, the Queen travelled in a pony and trap to save petrol, with the King and Princesses following on bicycles. War duties were performed from Buckingham Palace and the Queen took on new responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief of the three women's services: the ATS, WAAF and the WRNS.

Windsor Castle, heavily guarded, became a weekend retreat (the only place where the King wore civilian clothes) and a stronghold in case of emergency.

From the summer of 1940 it was also the home of the two Princesses. Officially, however, they were in a house 'somewhere in England'. During the Blitz, the castle bristled with anti-aircraft guns as German bombers droned overhead on their way to attack Britain's cities.

Air raid shelters were installed in the courtyards and the crown jewels were wrapped in newspaper and stored in bomb proofed vaults. New skills, including how to operate a stirrup pump to douse incendiary bombs, were learnt by the Princesses.

Herbert Morrison, the wartime Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, once remarked that the example set by the King and Queen did more to sustain the morale of the British people than any other single factor. After the fall of France in June 1940, the King and Queen resolutely rejected Churchill's plan that they

should live abroad in the event of German invasion. The Queen's reply was *"The children won't go without me. I won't leave without the King and the King will never leave"*. Every morning the King put in pistol practice at Windsor Castle or Buckingham Palace and even offered his services as chief of the Resistance, should Britain fall.

Like most people caught up in the war in Britain, the King and Queen faced their own worries. The allegiances of the former King, the Duke of Windsor, were always questionable and the royal family expressed their disapproval in their own special way. The Princesses' governess, Miss Marion Crawford ('Crawfie') wrote 'The royal conspiracy of silence has closed around him as it did about so many uncomfortable things. In the Palace and (Windsor) Castle, his name was never mentioned'.

In the event of German invasion, special plans had been laid to rush the royal family to houses in the West Country. The King and Queen's safety was entrusted to elite troops of the Brigade of Guards and Household Cavalry, whose armoured cars were ready to move at a moments notice.

But it was the Luftwaffe, rather than the German army, that came closest to killing the King and Queen. Nearly a week into the Blitz, on 13th September 1940, they were preparing for a day's work in the sitting room overlooking the courtyard in Buckingham Palace. A German bomber had flown straight down the Mall and dropped six bombs on the Palace, one of which destroyed the Chapel. In the quadrangle, 30 yards outside the sitting room, were two huge craters.

The Queen inspects troops for the Women's Service which include the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service), WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service).

In the autumn and winter of 1940 the King and Queen toured the bomb-damaged streets of the Capital and Britain's other cities, giving heart to people who had lost their homes and loved ones.

This was the monarchy's finest hour. In a harrowing schedule, the King and Queen followed the bombs across Britain, travelling in the royal train or the King's bullet-proof car. After

A worker demonstrates the mechanics of a Bren gun to the King during a visit to an arms factory in June 1940. The King always took a keen interest in the work of people he visited.

THE CHILDREN'S WAR

Innocence, Resilience and Courage

The Second World War put children centre stage from the first. Even before war was declared in September 1939, the imminent threat of air raids had already transformed the lives of hundreds and thousands of British children by scooping them from their city homes and transporting them into the countryside. Children would be affected by all that the war brought - evacuation both to the country and overseas, gas masks, blackouts, food shortages, rationing, the Blitz: one in ten of those killed in bombing raids was a child. Yet despite many children suffering grievously from being torn from their families, many who were children during the Second World War look back on it today as the most exciting time of their lives, years when they had new and undreamed of experiences.

The Children's War is now everyone's war. In this first decade of the twenty-first century, all those who have clear memories of the Second World War are in their mid-sixties at least. It is their memories of those six long years that increasingly encapsulate the story of the Home Front, told in books, radio and television programmes. They pass the stories on to generations who have no personal memory of that time but who are avid to know how it was in the first, though tragically not the last, war that put civilians - children included - centre stage on the battleground that was the Home Front between 1939 and 1945.

Indeed, the first imperative of the war in Britain, along with issuing gas masks and insisting that homes, shops, offices and streets must be blacked out, was the order to 'get the children away' from urban areas where bombs were expected to fall the minute hostilities were declared. From that moment forward, children were inextricably part of both the war experience and the war effort. Almost nothing that affected the civilian population would pass its children by. From ration books to the Blitz, from collecting salvage to recognising that 'it's patriotic to be shabby', children were up there on the front line. Government propaganda recognised this: children's welfare was entwined in the national message. 'Dig for Victory' so that children could have the green vegetables and fruit they needed in wartime; save for war bonds, and thus ensure your child's future; 'Do Without', 'Make Do and Mend', 'Holiday at Home' so that what few scarce resources there were could be diverted for children's well-being.

It was a war almost no one wanted. The enthusiasm that marked the start of the First World War was almost entirely absent. Although appeasement was later stigmatised and the 1930s condemned as a 'low, dishonest decade', historians have recently judged less harshly the desperate search for peace of a nation that was prepared to condone so much in its anxiety to avert another world war.

Politicians were well aware how profoundly unprepared the country was for war, and how high the cost of rearmament might be for social stability at home.

The people hoped against hope that collective security might ensure world peace, and only reluctantly realised that the price was too high, the demands and violations ultimately unappeasable.

And when it came, the war spared no one, children perhaps least of all. The war wearied and diminished everyone. It went on too long; it killed, injured, bereaved and rent apart too often; socially and culturally it impoverished too many. And children suffered in the myriad ways that adults did, but their loss was compounded by the draining away of their normal expectations of childhood, years that could never be recovered.

Yet there is invariably a natural resilience in young children, an often surprisingly unquenchable optimism, and children's own accounts of their daily wartime experiences are full of humour and sharp observations, as well as some sadness and pathos.

A child's wartime optic is different from that as an adult; it gives a differently refracted view.

Those wartime children are in great demand today. For schools studying the Second World War as part of the national curriculum, they are a 'primary source' as grand parents go into the class room to share their recollections, and be quizzed by children on their experiences.

The Innocents

Wars may end in jubilant victory celebrations but no war produces any winners, and children were victims of the Second World War to an extent never known in previous conflicts. Probably around 55 million adults and children, military and civilian, died between 1939 and 1945, and many more later from the effects of war.

In Britain's armed forces, 264,443 men and 624 women were killed; 3,596 of them were under l8 years of age, and 18 were only 14 years old.

In the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets, 30,248 men were killed, and 1,206 members of the Home Guard died while on duty. Thousands of children were left to grow up without a father.

On the Home Front in Britain 60,595 civilians were killed (including Civil Defence personnel), again leaving thousands of children who had lost one or sometimes both parents, as well as grandparents, brothers and sisters and other relations and friends whose loss would diminish their lives for ever. Of that total, 7,736 children under 16 were killed by enemy action - approximately one death in every eight - and 7,662 were seriously wounded.

There can be no balance sheet for death. Every single death of a child is as shocking as the next. The aggregate numbers can still be numbing. More than 1,200,0() () Jewish children died in the Holocaust; indeed only 11 per cent of Jewish children living in Europe in 1939 survived the war.

In Germany, 6 million children under the age of 16 were involved in the 'total war' as combatants and as civilians, and many of those can be counted among the over 3 million dead, wounded and missing of the German armed forces; nearly 4 million German civilians were killed. In the last desperate days of the battle for Berlin in 1945, members of the Hitler Youth, some of them as young as 12, fought the Red Army; only around 10 per cent of them survived.

In the Warsaw Rising between August and October 1944, 20,000 children died, and 400,000 perished in the siege of Leningrad.

In July 1943, 5,586 children were killed in the Allied raids on Hamburg. Japanese schoolchildren, most armed only with swords, fought US forces on Okinawa in April 1945. No one knows how many children were killed, died later - sometimes decades later - of their injuries, or were born malformed as the result of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

At the end of the war Poland had a million orphans; one Greek child in every eight had no parent left alive. A conservative estimate suggests that there were 30 million displaced persons wandering Europe in 1945, and a large number of these homeless refugees - probably around 13 million - were abandoned children.

To focus on Britain in the 'people's war': many children suffered the dangers and hardships of war with their parents, and many grew up with knowledge and anxieties beyond their years.

In all, I,655,710 children were evacuated under the official evacuation scheme on 1 September 1939 and exoduses (1,134,235 with their schools and 721,425 with their mothers).

Many found the experience enjoyable. They settled down with kindly foster parents and enjoyed country life. Thousands did not.

THE WAY WE WERE

Britain's Wartime Entertainment

For many people on the home front, the war was experienced through the wireless set. The nine o'clock news rapidly became a daily ritual. The Bakelite set would be turned on a few minutes in advance to allow the valves to warm up, and then the family would gather in solemn silence to listen to the latest reports from the front, which were prefaced by the reassuringly authoritative words 'Here is the news'.

It was not so much a sharpened interest in current affairs that kept people tied to programmes such as War Report and Into Battle; it was more that most families had someone - a son, a brother, a husband - in the forces overseas, maybe in the thick of the fighting which was being reported.

The newsreaders were now known by name, so that in the event of an invasion it would be harder for the Germans to make English broadcasts with the authority of the BBC.

Broadcasters with marked regional accents were employed for the same reason: it was thought that the Germans would find it hard to do a convincing impersonation of Yorkshireman Wilfred Pickles. The newsreaders quickly became celebrities.

Bruce Belfrage achieved special esteem in October 1940, when Broadcasting House received a direct hit in the middle of a radio broadcast.

Listeners heard the crash of the bomb, and then the voice of someone whispering 'Are you all right?' But Belfrage carried on as if nothing had happened.

The wireless was more than just a news service. The BBC always saw itself as a major contributor to the war effort.

On the principle that a happy worker is a productive worker, the Corporation instituted music shows for the factories. Music While You Work went out every day at 10.30 in the morning and 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

it was a well-known fact that the Nazis were no good at jokes

Now the vast, industrious populations of munitions plants hummed along happily to the strains of **'If I Had My Way'** and **'That Lovely Weekend'** as they turned out tanks and shells.

Radio comedy was Britain's secret weapon - it was a well-known fact that the Nazis were no good at jokes. The high point of the week came at 8.30 pm on Thursdays, when Tommy 'It's That Man Again' Handley delivered his quick-fire, vaguely surrealist half-hour.
It was said, only half in jest, that if the Germans were to invade during ITMA they could march unopposed all the way to Whitehall.

What is certain is that no invader would have seen the hilarity which every British soul saw in such catch phrases as the dipsomaniac Colonel Chin-strap's 'I don't mind if I do!', Mrs Mopp's 'Can I do you now, sir?", and other such nonsense: 'Don't forget the diver!', 'It's me nerves!' (pronounced 'noives') or 'After you Claude!'

Another much loved comedy programme was Hi Gang with Bebe Daniels, Ben Lyon and Vic Oliver. Two of the stars of this show were Americans who had chosen to stay in Britain when the war began.

Britons appreciated the fact that they had chosen to share in the hardship of the Blitz as well as share a few jokes. 'Raid or not, we all sat under the stairs and table,' said one housewife, while Ben and Bebe made us laugh and forget briefly Jerry and his hate.

'Big-hearted' Arthur Askey and Richard 'Stinker' Murdoch did their best to keep spirits up with Band Waggon in the first months of the war.

In I940 Askey and Murdoch passed the comedy baton on to the cast of Happidrome: Mr Lovejoy, Ramsbottom and Enoch.

But the wireless was not all larks. There was still plenty of air time for the high-minded. The writer J.B. Priestley had a regular broadcast called Postscript, which discussed such abstractions as Freedom, Security, Money and The Kingdom of Heaven.

The Brains Trust, another wartime hit, was an exercise in popular philosophy. A panel of experts would discuss such existential questions as 'Who made God?' and 'Why can't you tickle yourself?' These posers, supplied by members of the public, were subjected to serious analysis. One of the panellists, Professor Cyril Joad, became known for launching into any debate with the infuriating words 'It depends what you mean by...'. Other broadcasts had a more practical bent.

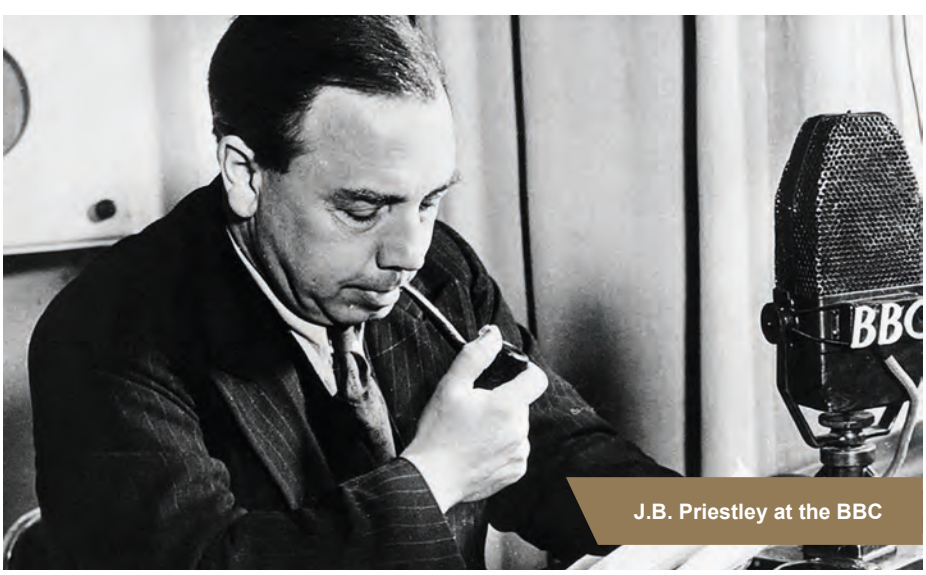
The 5-minute Kitchen Front, introduced by Freddie Grisewood, gave recipes - there was a bottomless demand for new ways of cooking the same old rations - as well as advice from the Ministry of Food on fuel economy.

But music was the staple fare of the wireless, and it was music which did most to comfort the lonely, encourage the fearful and raise the spirits of a beleaguered nation.

Two songs stand out: **'We'll Meet Again'** and **'The White Cliffs of Dover'.**

These simple melodies with their artless Iyrics made a star of Vera Lynn because they expressed the emotional state in which millions spent the war: enduring the pain of separation and the dread of loss, but fighting to keep alive the hope of reunion.

All over Britain, and wherever in the world there were British soldiers, the words of the song were invoked like a prayer: '...don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again some sunny day...'.



J.B. Priestley at the BBC

HOME GUARD

Britain's Local Defence Volunteers

Most of us have, at some time or other, enjoyed the BBC television series "Dad's Army", with its somewhat light hearted look at the Second World War's Home Guard. With its memorable signature tune sung by Bud Flanagan "Who do you think you are kidding Mr Hitler?" it's usually among the first imagery evoked when thinking of the Home Guard.

However, despite this portrayal, in its time the Home Guard represented a formidable force of willing volunteers ready to give up their lives in protection of their country. Indeed, should Hitler's Germany succeed with its invasion plans, the Home Guard would be ready and waiting. So how did it all begin and how did the Home Guard hope to protect Britain from a seemingly unstoppable Germany?

Invasion Fears and the LDV

It was with considerable haste during the spring of 1940, that Britain began to prepare itself for a potential German invasion. With the government all too aware of how real this threat was becoming and how it was affecting Britain's morale, it began to think up ways of how the country could be helped should the unthinkable ever happen.

As a direct result of one of the darkest days of World War Two (on the 14th May 1940), when Germany had poured into France practically unchallenged, the war minister Anthony Eden gave a now historic radio broadcast to the nation. In it, he warned of the threat of invasion by means of German parachute regiments and how this awful scenario would need an established fighting force already in place to see off these unwanted visitors.

He urged all male civilians aged 17-65* who had (for whatever reason) not been drafted into the services, to put themselves forward for the sake of their country and help to form a new fighting force called 'The Local Defence Volunteers' or LDV for short, or (as some people later joked), *'Look, Duck and Vanish'!*

Eden had made clear in his broadcast that the passing of a medical examination wouldn't be necessary and that providing you were male, 'capable of free movement' and of the right age, all one needed to do was enrol at their local police station.

It's true to say that if Eden was ever in any doubt about the impetus his broadcast had had on the general public, his fears were soon to be allayed. For by the end of the following day some 250,000 men had volunteered, with these volunteers coming from all walks of life including mining, factory working, public transport and farming to note but a few.

Then even more staggering, by the end of the month a total of 750,000 men had come forward. Some problems did exist initially with many police stations soon running out of the enrolment forms. However, despite this small inconvenience it was good to see that Britain shared in the governments view that it had best guard itself in some manner and 'better be safe than sorry'.

A Change of Name

In a moment of inspiration, Winston Churchill renamed the LDV, the Home Guard, although later it became affectionately known quite simply as 'Dad's Army'. Considering the LDV had only been in operation for a month and a half at the time of this announcement, it came as a surprise to most. However, despite this, the role of the Home Guard principally remained the same.

As the newly named Home Guard still lacked sufficient numbers of weapons, its high-spirited members often had to improvise. While on patrol they would take with them items such as pikes, truncheons, pick axes, broom handles and even golf clubs!

It was reported that in at least one Home Guard unit, the guards took with them on patrol duty packets of pepper which would, if required, be thrown into the eyes of invaders and thus interfere with their vision. The Home Guard also made its own fully functional weapons from pieces of scrap and litter.

For example, Molotov cocktail anti-tank grenades were made from used beer and mineral water bottles and old pieces of cast iron drainpipes became 13-inch mortars. Quite ingenious.

As much as we can look back on this situation of improvisation with amusement now, it was of a real concern to Churchill who believed that the lack of equipment could deter volunteers from coming forward. Uniforms were also limited and all volunteers had to begin with were a simple forage cap and 'HG' stamped armband. Gladly though, this deficiency in arms didn't last for too long.

Thanks to the United States, old World War One rifles and revolvers/ammunition were provided for use by the Home Guard. A consignment of 500,000 .300 rifles that arrived in the country in July 1941, was just one such example of America's generosity. Proper uniforms eventually became widely available too and by the winter of 1940, all Home Guard volunteers had been kitted out with standard issue army uniforms.

The Dad's Army Role

Being a Home Guard volunteer was far from easy. All but a few members would work all day in their full time jobs and then (later that evening) take up their Home Guard duties. It was also extremely dangerous too with some 1206 members killed whilst serving on duty and 557 seriously wounded. Of course, while recruits enthusiastically carried out their duties, they would always be listening out for the ring of church bells - the pre-arranged signal announcing the start of Germany's invasion. All of these responsibilities helped to release the regular army to do other equally important tasks. It also helped to boost the morale of troops serving overseas, for they knew a very able force back 'home' was looking after their families.

One In the Eye for Hitler

Despite Hitler and the other fascist armies often sneering at the Home Guard, Hitler (in particular) was all too aware of the growing strength of British Civil Defence. Under the National Service (Number 2) Act of December 1941, male civilians found that they could be ordered to join the Home Guard and attend up to 48 hours training a month. This 'call-up' was quite a surprise especially considering that the numbers of volunteers never fell below one million.

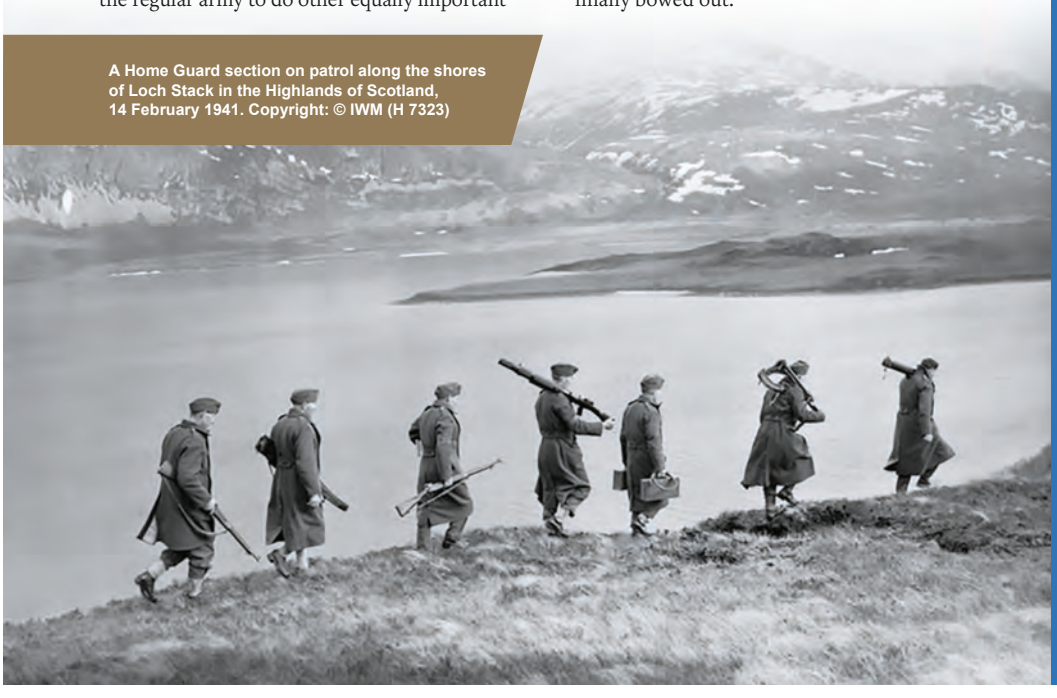
To mark the first anniversary of the Home Guard, a parade was held at Buckingham Palace on the 20th May 1941. With its volunteers totalling 1.5 Million at this point in time, the Home Guard was clearly going from strength to strength.

In one of Churchill's many speeches, he said of the Home Guard in 1940;

"If the enemy had descended suddenly in large numbers from the sky in different parts of the country, they would have found only little clusters of men mostly armed with shotguns, gathered around our search light positions. But now, whenever he comes, if he comes, he will find wherever he should place his foot, that he will be immediately attacked by resolute, determined men who have a perfectly clear intention and resolve to namely put him to death!"

All Good Things...

With the Battle of Britain long won and invasion looking less and less likely, everybody was now preparing for victory and not invasion. And after 'Operation Overlord', a real feeling of this victory being within Britain's grasp was shared. Even when Hitler unleashed onto the country his V1 and V2 terror weapons, resulting in thousands of civilian deaths, Britain's earlier belief in a German invasion was now seen as unrealistic. So on the 3rd December 1944, with a stand down parade of 7000 men in London, the Home Guard finally bowed out.



A Home Guard section on patrol along the shores of Loch Stack in the Highlands of Scotland, 14 February 1941. Copyright: © IWM (H 7323)

SO, WHAT DID THE HOME GUARD ACTUALLY DO?

Members of the Home Guard were involved in:

a. Manning of aircraft batteries - Around 142,000 brave men served in this type of post with over 1000 killed whilst on duty.

b. Patrolling of Waterways (such as canals and rivers), Railway stations, Coastlines, Factories and Aerodromes.

c. Clearing up of debris following air raid attacks.

d. Searching through of rubble for trapped civilians following air raid attacks.

e. Offer of fighting assistance to the army - There was even a Home Guard section of 'Skating Boys' who could deliver this help speedily by 'roller-skating' their way to the place they were called.

f. Construction of concrete pill boxes.

g. Erecting of defence lines including the laying of anti-tank obstacles, barbed wire barriers along beaches and farming implements acting as roadblock check points.

h. Placement of obstacles in fields to prevent enemy aircraft from landing.

i. Removal of or blacking out of signposts.

j. Improvement of weapons skills by hours of target practice - Believe it or not, but a German bomber was shot down by the rifle fire of the Home Guard after it was sighted flying over a London district.

k. Guarding of Buckingham Palace - The Royal Family* had its own Home Guard Company which formed part of the 1st County of London (Westminster) Battalion. This honour befell the Home Guard in its third year.

l. Bomb Disposal

** King George VI later became Colonel in Chief of the Home Guard.*

VE & VJ: FORGOTTEN VOICES

Personal accounts from the Second World War

Forgotten Voices of the Second World War, is a remarkable collection of taped interviews held by the Sound Archive of the Imperial War Museum. It is an archive of extraordinary depth, containing thousands of recordings of men and women who have served or witnessed the wars and campaigns from the First World War to the present. Apart from a number of French and German accounts, the Imperial War Museum interviews primarily cover British and Commonwealth participants. The exception is the Salerno landings, where the personal accounts are of American troops. These accounts come from a collection presented to the Sound Archive some years ago.

The length of these accounts varies - some take many pages, whereas others select the most affecting moments. In some cases, contributors appear several times. The Archives capture the experiences and atmosphere of the Second World War: the waiting, the preparation, the action and the consequences of those actions. Some of the accounts are raw and horrific, others more matter-of-fact or reflective. They all have their place in the tapestry of war. Recalling experiences forty or fifty years after the event can lead to occasional inaccuracies, but what cannot be taken away is the feeling that comes from these interviews. It has been a privilege to listen to these men and women, many long dead, and to bring to life again their vivid memories.

These are their words...

Flight Sergeant David Russell, Prisoner of the Japanese

The day the Japs surrendered was a very interesting morning. I got my barrack out as usual, at 6.30 in the morning, with the boys lined up in fours, and no Japs came to take the count! They never failed before. Dead on time you had to be there! We hung around wondering what the hell was going on. Eventually we sat down - normally the last thing we should have done. Then we saw one of the Japanese sergeants emerging from the Guard Room and his head was bowed.

He looked around a bit disconsolately then went back in. Everybody was wondering what was going on. We thought the Yanks had landed and the Japs were going to kill us. The uncertainty frightened the life out of me.

Then the sliding window of the cook-house was suddenly rammed aside and there was Kinsella, the cook, and his eyes were staring, and he shouted, 'The war's over! The war's over!' For the following two weeks we hung around, speculating about what would happen and foraging for food.

Air Vice-Marshal Donald Bennett Commander Pathfinder Force, RAF

Dresden is a name that has long been produced to make out that we went to the trouble to bomb women and children. We bombed Dresden because it was a prime target on that night. We were called during the day by the Russians, who particularly called for a raid on Dresden with everything we'd got, because troops were pouring through Dresden. There were something like 80,000 at the time on their way to the Russian front, less than a hundred miles away. The Russians were being held up by these troop reinforcements.

Could we help? So at short notice, we were put on to Dresden, which we bombed perfectly normally. The fact that it caught fire rather easily was the Germans' fault. They had no air-raid precautions and they didn't believe in building anything other than wooden residences in Dresden. They also happened to have the German civil service in Dresden, more than anywhere else. They'd moved them out of Berlin for safety - so we did some heavy bombing.

Sergeant Charles Pratt Mortar Company, 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment

On VE Day, I was lucky. I was on leave at home in Portsmouth. I'd already met a Portsmouth girl and we celebrated together until about five o'clock in the morning.

I was a bit nervous even though I was 21 because I had a strict father. I tell you, if you were in uniform, you couldn't move. You were pulled in everywhere.

The best thing to do was either to stay indoors or find some civilian clothes to put on, because if you walked about in a military uniform, you just couldn't move. Parties developed all over the place.

If you were down in town, you were cordially invited to have a drink and the pubs didn't close for a week. The police went blind for seven days.

Continued on Page 130

THE ARMY AIR CORPS CHARITY

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On the 80th Anniversary of VE/VJ Day the Army Air Corps takes great pride in remembering its forebears that helped secure peace and freedom

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Marine Peter Dunstan. Royal Marine, taken prisoner at Singapore

In the camp, we lived in huts made of bamboo which we had to build ourselves. Just a bamboo platform eighteen inches off the ground and a palm leaved roof over the top. No sides, so the mosquitoes had a whale of a time. No blankets, except what you owned yourself. No clothes or food utensils were issued.

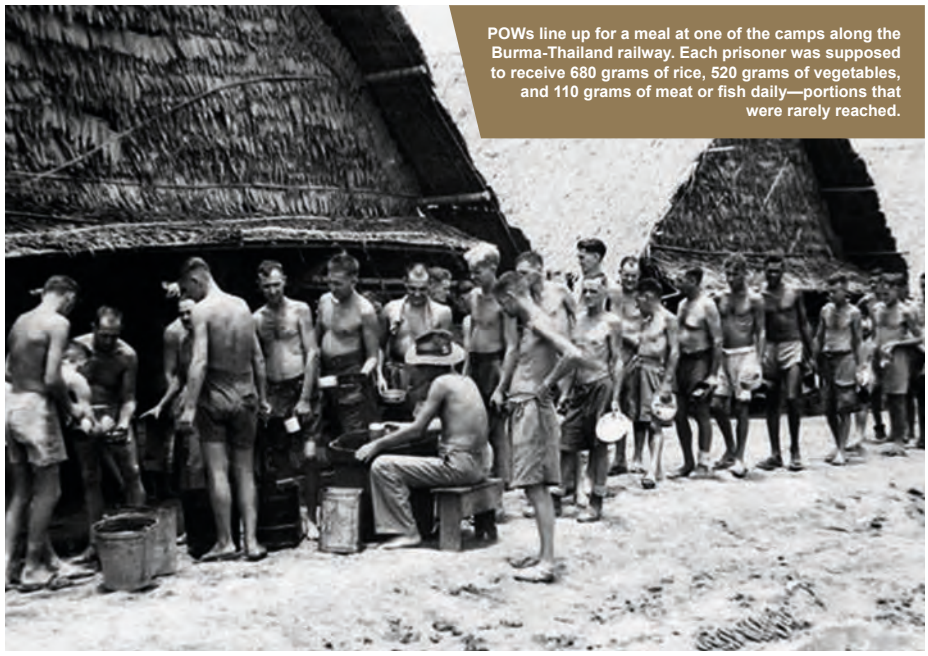
So it was a pint mug of rice in the morning, then we were marched out of the camp and on to the railway before dawn. At midday they would let us stop for some more rice, then we carried on working until it was dark and we were marched back to the camp.

For three months I never saw the camp I was living in. If it poured with rain, you carried on working, boiling sunshine or monsoon, you just carried on. We liked the monsoon because we had a bath.

It was a struggle to survive. We had nicknames for all the Japs. One little swine was known as Silver Bullet because he had a bullet on his belt. At this particular cutting the chaps were working on bosun's swings, drilling the rocks for dynamiting. Silver Bullet would stand right on the edge of the cliff and if he thought you weren't working hard enough he would throw a rock at you.

One day he slipped and landed in the river about two hundred feet below. It was very strange, how he slipped. There was another one called the Mad Mongol. He was a Korean and the Koreans were worse than the Japanese.

I was going to the toilet one night and I didn't bow or salute and he knocked the hell out of me. But it was a question of suspended animation. You just avoided any trouble that you could. I only got bashed twice in three-and-a half years - I was lucky, I kept out of it.



POWs line up for a meal at one of the camps along the Burma-Thailand railway. Each prisoner was supposed to receive 680 grams of rice, 520 grams of vegetables, and 110 grams of meat or fish daily—portions that were rarely reached.

Captain Richard Rhodes-James Ist Battalion, 6th Gurkha Rifles

Although the Second Chindit Expedition did have an effect, it was not cost effective to achieve this with six brigades. The 77th Brigade achieved great things, the other brigades did not.

Two or three brigades would have been enough to commit to the LRP task, and Slim could have used the other three more brigades to much better effect in the main battle. When people find out I was in Burma, they often ask if I was a Chindit.

The romantic stories of the Chindits are often the only thing people remember about the Burma campaign. At times you see and hear in the media that Wingate turned the tide of the war in Burma. I think it was turned at Kohima and Imphal by the Fourteenth Army.

Petty Officer Ronald Duquemin Depth Charge operator, aboard *HMS Mermaid*

When VE Day was announced, we were anchored outside Liverpool and we all said we'd go ashore and get drunk, but instead we had to go and round up these German submarines that had surrendered. The submarines were still in the Atlantic and they had to fly a big black flag, and so we went fifteen or twenty miles out from Liverpool and escorted them in.

We were still nervous that they might fire on us. The only Germans I saw were on the conning tower and we flashed a signal to them and they followed us back to port.

Londoners gather in the street to celebrate the announcement that Germany had unconditionally surrendered.

British Sexton self-propelled guns drive down the Charlottenburger Chaussee in Berlin during the Four Nations VJ Day parade on 7 September 1945, five days after the formal surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay. Copyright © IWM (BU 10256)

Peter Bennett, Child in Godalming

On VE Day, we broke into school and stole a shirt off one of the footballers and put it on the flagpole in the local recreation ground as a form of celebration.

We had VE Day parties on the village green - bonfires and later on, the following year, we got a letter from King George VI - thanking the boys and girls for coping so well during the war and reminding us what our older brothers and sisters had done for us - which was a nice thought.
I remember having oranges during VE parties - but I was sick after eating the orange peel, having no idea that wasn't what you did.

Corporal Eric Lord 5th Battalion, Coldstream Guards

When the war ended we were issued with some rum, but there was no grand celebration. There should have been a great sense of relief.

We should have had somebody to organise something. We should have had somebody to tell us to raise our mugs to the PBI - the Poor Bloody Infantry - but no-one did. I just sat there, trying to collect my thoughts, and all I could think was, 'Well that's the end of that. I don't have to dig any more slit trenches or hear the sound of the multi-barrel mortar again.'

Sergeant Alan Brewster 58th Light Anti Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery

I was in Belsen on the day the war ended. I got my pass and travelled to Osnabruck, the first staging place from Belsen. I got there, managed to clamber up the stairs, got into a bunk bed and the following morning, I couldn't move. They had to come and lift me out. A Scottish doctor came to see me and told me that I had rheumatic fever. I caught it from Belsen. They took me by ambulance to a big country house. I lay on a bed with no pillows, stiff as a board. I was fed through a teapot, through the spout. And I could hear the doctors and nurses having a good time because it was VE Day. I was very cross because I was missing it all.

Flight Lieutenant Frank Ziegler 609 Squadron, RAF

The end of the war took away the purpose that for years had united young men of a dozen different countries in friendship and mutual loyalty.

Flying together and fighting together, it had been a way of life and fulfilment that few would ever experience again, even if for so many others, it had been a way of death.

Sylvia Townson, Civilian in London

We had a party on VE Day. They must have closed off Fernhead Street because they had a bonfire in the middle of the road.

There was lots of food because everyone gave something towards it off their coupons. I remember my father entered me for the talent contest. I belted out 'You are my Sunshine'.
I came second.

Lilias Walker, Teenager in Hull

I remember the announcement being made on the radio that, at such and such a time, the war would be over. Where people had got stuff from I don't know where, but immediately there were bonfires and everybody drew back their curtains and turned on all their lights. Every single light in the house was on because, of course, no lights had been allowed during the war.

Brigadier James Hill 3rd Parachute Regiment

The largest and most successful airborne operation in history took place at ten o'clock on a glorious sunny morning on the 24th March 1945. That day, the Allied Airborne Corps formed a spearhead for the British and American armies that breached the formidable enemy defences on the banks of the River Rhine at Wesel.

Major-General Hugh Stockwell 82nd West African Division

When I took over as Commander, I found the 82nd West African Division to be rather a luxury organisation. It was my responsibility to win the battle with the 82nd Division.

I picked out an RSM from the 3rd Nigeria Regiment, who had been awarded the Iron Cross fighting for the Germans in West Africa in the First World War.

He stayed with me as a personal RSM for a year and a half. He advised me on the Africans and through him I could find out what they thought of their British officers.

He was tremendous, I got him a DCM, and he must be about the only soldier to wear an Iron Cross and a DCM.

The end of the war ... and its aftermath

With the cessation of hostilities, the guns may have fallen silent, but for countless servicemen and women, the journey home was far from immediate. Many remained stationed abroad, tasked with occupation duties in a shattered Germany or the tense theatres of the Far East. For those fortunate enough to return, the homecoming was bitter-sweet. The jubilation of VE and VJ Day had given way to the sobering realities of post-war life.

The physical and psychological scars of conflict endured long after the battles had ended. Severely wounded veterans faced a lifetime of dependence - on family, on carers, on a welfare system still in its infancy. For many, the war had not only taken comrades and youth but also limbs, mobility, and independence.

Moreover, the Britain they returned to was not the one they had left behind in 1939. Cities lay in ruins, rationing persisted, and the economic toll of six years of war hung heavy. Dreams of resuming normality were tempered by the stark transformation of the social and political landscape. What awaited them was not simply a return to the past, but an uncertain forging of a new future.

POSTERS OF WAR

As bombs fell and Britain struggled to survive the war, the public were constantly exposed to the persuasive images of posters demanding their help as well as keeping their spirits high.

During wartime, posters went up on walls, buses and buildings all over the country. They played a vital role in keeping the people of Britain informed, uplifted and feeling part of the war effort.

Already tested and found to be successful in World War I, posters represented the issues of the day in strong and simplified terms. They depicted people as heroes or villains and tapped into the basic feelings of loyalty to family and the nation. There were posters covering every possible relevant topic - matters of national security, how to increase production and how to eat healthily during the difficulty days of rationing.

And there were recruiting posters for the armed and auxiliary forces, as well as posters projecting the images of war leaders. A member of the public, asked for his views as part of the Mass Observation study of British life carried out in the '30s and '40s, remarked:

"In one short walk (I counted) forty-eight official posters... on hoardings, shelters, buildings, including one telling you: to eat National Wholemeal Bread, not to waste food, to keep your children in the country, to know where the rest centre is, how to behave in an air-raid shelter, to look out in the black out, to look out for poison gas, to carry your gas mask always, to join the ATS, to fall in with the fire bomb fighters, to register for Civil Defence duties, to help build a plant, to recruit for the Air Training Corps, to save for Victory."

Posters played a complimentary role alongside radio and a range of mass-market newspapers. Together they made up a highly effective propaganda machine, keeping people informed and aware of events. During the early days of World War II, public opinion was not always in favour of the war effort in the way that it had been in the previous war. It was largely due to the success of poster campaigns that attitudes changed. The artists of the day became skilful at judging the changing mood of the public, and then producing posters that were relevant and persuasive. Wartime posters became an eye-catching and effective way of rallying people to the cause. And, as with radio and cinema, a note of well-judged humour usually had far more effect than straight forward propaganda.

Humour was particularly effective in the case of the more sensitive and subtle issues

such as national security. Some of the most successful posters were those that featured the memorable catch-phrase 'Careless Talk Costs Lives'. These were the work of Kenneth Bird (known as 'Fougasse' after a land mine that sometimes hit its target).

Humour was particularly effective in the case of more sensitive and subtle issues...

He was an artist who worked for Punch magazine and his posters were created in a gently persuasive style designed to appeal to the sophisticated 'Punch-reading City worker'.

The crucial topic of careless talk was tackled in a very different way by another prominent graphic artist called Abram Games, who became the official War Office poster designer in 1942. His 'Your Talk May Kill Your Comrades' was a starkly direct image and one of the most famous of the war years. Much of the power of Games' images undoubtedly came from his whole-hearted belief in the message they carried:

"...I feel strongly that the high purpose of wartime posters was mainly responsible for their excellence."

Many of the most famous slogans of the war years came from posters directed at housewives. Women were constantly being urged to 'make do and mend', to 'dig for victory' or to save their kitchen waste.

Most of these campaigns were successful. Lawns and flower beds all over Britain were dug up and transformed into vegetable plots and families began eating produce from their own back yards and from the wilds of the countryside. In 1943, Mrs E Walsh, a secretary from Rickmansworth, wrote to her brother:

'At home we are still gathering wild strawberries - to date we must have had over a pound, which is quite a lot as they are very light - and loganberries. We have our own potatoes, peas and broad beans. Broad beans and bacon is the supper we have on the night Daddy comes home from his trips around the countryside.'

A poster showing the British countryside, with the words 'Your Britain, Fight for it Now' failed to strike a chord. It had ignored the fact that most people lived in towns and cities and this rural idyll was a far cry from their everyday Britain. Similarly, the Minster

of Health's attempts to prevent mothers and children who had been evacuated to the country from returning to cities - 'Don't do it, Mother' fell on deaf ears. By 1940, many women and children had made their way back to the cities as they were homesick, and threats of heavy bombing hadn't yet materialised.

Another important role of posters was to project the image of key wartime leaders. Churchill was the favourite subject, and many posters captured the remarkable combination of his leadership qualities and his power of words.

An American poster portrayed Churchill as the indomitable British bulldog - an image that suited his personality well and fixed him in people's minds as vividly as any conventional picture. For many people though, the spirit of wartime Britain is epitomised by Churchill's words made famous by another wartime poster 'Let us go forward together'.

Wartime posters did more then persuade, advertise and project images. They also helped many people to feel that they were not alone during the long years of doing without and putting a brave face on it, and that each and every person had a part to play in the Allied Victory.

Step into History's Light:
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Join us as Challenge The Wild proudly stands at the forefront of history as we illuminate the Lamplights of Peace on the monumental occasion of VJ-Day 80, August 15th 2025.

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Yet our journey doesn't end there. Beyond this historic moment lies a continuum of comparative events and expeditions, spanning until the 50th anniversary of the Falklands War in 2032.

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Challenge The Wild is run by Dan Searson

Dan is a seasoned military leader and adventure specialist with over two decades of experience in leading high-stakes operations and expeditions across the globe.

A graduate of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Dan has served in various key leadership roles, including as a Platoon Commander in Bosnia and an Executive Officer during the Iraq War. His operational experience extends to leading teams in complex environments, where he was instrumental in training and strategic operations.

Beyond his military service, Dan has led adventurous expeditions to some of the world's most challenging terrains, including the Alps, Mont Blanc, and the jungles of Peru. His leadership skills were further recognised with two commendations for his role during the UK's COVID-19 response, where he demonstrated exceptional resilience and adaptability.

Today, Dan combines his military leadership insights with his passion for the outdoors, offering bespoke leadership coaching programs that push boundaries and inspire greatness. His unique approach, rooted in military discipline and enriched by real-world adventure, makes him a sought-after mentor for those looking to lead with courage, integrity, and resilience.

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Lieutenant Hammy Gray attacks a Japanese destroyer, off Honshu Island, 9th August 1945.

THE FLEET AIR ARM IN THE FAR EAST & PACIFIC

by Commander Sue Eagles QVRM RD Director of Fundraising and Communications Navy Wings

The Royal Navy and its aircraft and aircraft carriers played an essential part in the Second World War. Naval aircraft provided air cover to convoys keeping the Atlantic life-line open, supported the land campaigns in north Africa and Europe, changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean and helped secure victory in the Pacific.

The Painting *'No Place To Land'* depicts *HMS Illustrious* after a Kamikaze attack, the Corsairs unable to land on her deck.

From the iconic action against the Italian Fleet at Taranto in 1940 and throughout the gruelling Battle of the Atlantic, which lasted the entire six years of the war, naval aircraft were a vital weapon at sea. However, months after Victory in Europe had been declared, it was to be the unremitting and inestimably cruel war in the Pacific where the Fleet Air Arm was to earn its place in history. The only British aircraft to attack Japan were operated by the Royal Navy flying from the decks of Royal Navy aircraft carriers.

For four years in the Far East, British servicemen fought and suffered, alongside Australians, New Zealanders, Americans, Indians, Chinese, Dutch and others, to defeat a pitiless and ruthless enemy. Over 50,000 British were detained in Prisoner of War camps as the Japanese military machine swept all before it. The devastating attack on Pearl Harbour and the sinking of *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse* in December 1941 proved only the beginning, as in rapid succession Japanese forces swept through British Malaya, capturing Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Burma and the islands of Sumatra and Java in a relentless advance through Southeast Asia to the edge of the Indian Ocean.

By the end of 1944, the urgency of the war in the Pacific brought together the mightiest combined fleet the world has ever seen, as with grim determination the Allied coalition fought its way back across the Pacific, island by island.

In August 1944 the British Pacific Fleet didn't exist but six months later it was the most powerful strike force in the history of the Royal Navy, fighting as professional equals alongside the US Navy in the thick of the action. The aircraft carriers, *HMS Illustrious, Victorious, Indomitable, Implacable* and *Indefatigable* and light carriers, *Colossus, Glory, Venerable and Vengeance*, with their embarked Naval Air Squadrons made a huge contribution to the defeat of Japan in the final months of the war.

34 Naval Air Squadrons of *Avengers, Seafires, Corsairs, Hellcats, Fireflies and Barracudas* were in action against the Japanese right up until the end of the war, including carrying out intensive air strikes on the Japanese mainland, facing fierce enemy action and Kamikaze attacks - and winning a VC.

Palembang

The first large scale action carried out by the Fleet Air Arm against the Japanese was the devastation of the oil refineries at Palembang and Soengei Gerong in Sumatra in January 1945. The attack force of *Avengers, Corsairs, Hellcats and Fireflies*, successfully put the refineries out of action for

months, severely hampering Japan's ability to continue the war in the islands. As important as the destruction of the oil refineries, was the fearlessness of the Fleet Air Arm Seafire pilots proving more than a match for the Japanese in the air.

Okinawa

Shortly after Palembang, the Fleet Air Arm was in action again carrying out an intensive assault on the Sakishima group of Islands in the Pacific, neutralising Japanese airfields ahead of the American assault on Okinawa. Operations began in March with airfields and infrastructure subjected to intensive and continuous attacks. Between 26 March - 25 May, the Fleet Air Arm flew 5,335 sorties. Despite the islands being heavily defended, 42 enemy aircraft were destroyed in the air and more than 100 on the ground preventing the Japanese flying aircraft to Okinawa. Forty one naval aircrew were lost in action and nineteen Naval Air Squadrons were awarded Okinawa 1945 Battle Honours.

Kamikaze

From May onwards Kamikaze attacks took a heavy toll on the Fleet. The Royal Navy's armoured deck carriers were much more resilient than the wooden decks of the American carriers. As a result, the British Pacific Fleet was tasked to take the fight to the enemy and do as much as possible to lessen the attacks by denying the Japanese use of their airfields, bases, and fuel supplies.

The late Sir Roy Beldam, who was an Observer flying *Avengers* with *848 Squadron* in *HMS Formidable*, was on duty on the day *HMS Formidable* was attacked by Kamikaze on 4 May 1945.

"I was thrown off my feet by the impact but luckily not hurt" said Sir Roy. *"My pilot, Don Jupp DSC, was caught taxiing forward in his aircraft on the flight deck and unfortunately died. Eight men were killed and forty-seven wounded in the attack but after the fires were extinguished, the two foot deep hole in the flight deck was filled with quick drying cement, covered with steel plate, and the ship was back at flying stations a couple of hours later."*

Japanese Mainland

The most challenging operation for the British Pacific Fleet, was the final attack on the Japanese mainland. Despite deadly accurate anti-aircraft fire, barrage balloons, typhoons and sea fog as well as operational fatigue, the Fleet Air Arm managed to do a vast amount of damage, destroying enemy aircraft and shipping and disabling vital installations. Thirteen Naval Air Squadrons were awarded Battle Honours for operations against targets on the Japanese home islands from 16 July 1945 to 11 August 1945.

When the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on 7 August, it was hoped the surrender of Japan would be imminent.

However, when no Japanese surrender was forthcoming, a second bomb fell on Nagasaki.

In his speech to the Combined Fleet on 15 August 1945, Admiral Halsey said *"The war is ended. Brothers in Arms, you have brought an implacable, treacherous and barbaric foe to his knees in abject surrender. Wherever you have met the foe, on the sea, on the land or in the air, you have been supreme. You have helped write finis in golden letters on the pages of history."*

While hostilities ceased on 15 August it was to be many months before those serving with the British Pacific Fleet returned home. Over 4,000 naval aviators lost their lives in WW2 and a further 200 were killed in action in the Pacific. Their bravery and sacrifice will never be forgotten and lives on in the flying memorial of the Navy Wings Heritage Flight at RNAS Yeovilton.

To find out more and support the charity visit **navywings.org.uk**

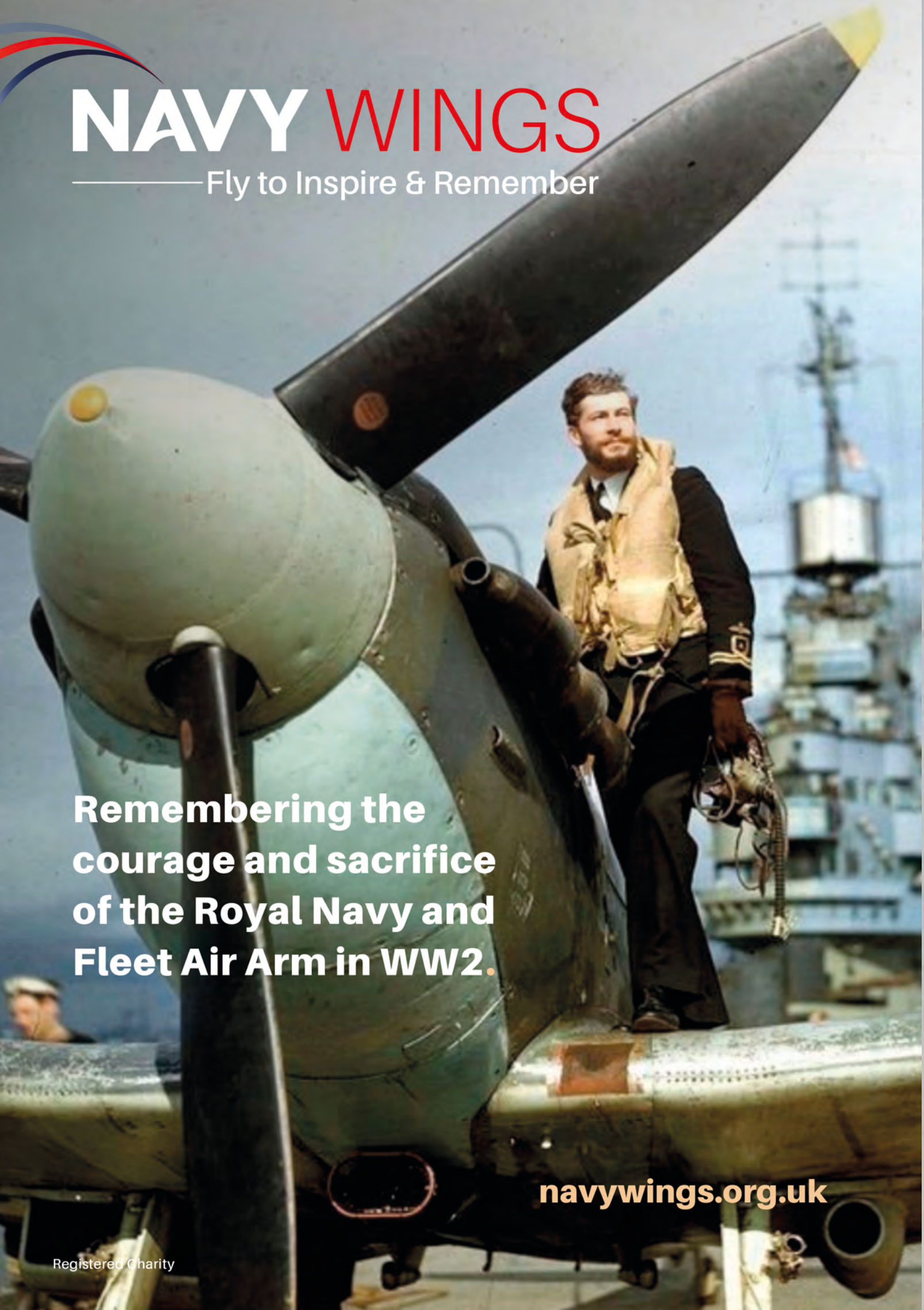
HMS Formidable is hit by a Kamikaze attack on the 4th May, 1945

Victoria Cross for Supreme Courage Lieutenant Robert 'Hammy' Gray VC DSC RCNVR

Almost the last strike of the war saw a second award of a Victoria Cross to a pilot of the Fleet Air Arm.

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, the Senior Pilot of 1841 Naval Air Squadron was serving in HMS Formidable. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for supreme courage leading his section of Corsairs in an attack on a Japanese destroyer lying in the harbour of Onagawa Wan, on the Japanese Island of Honshu on 9 August 1945.

Diving to low level and making his approach, Gray came under intense anti-aircraft fire from ships and shore batteries. His aircraft was hit and caught fire. Despite the smoke and flames, he held his aim unflinchingly and pressed home his attack and by brilliant flying obtained a direct hit on the destroyer before his Corsair crashed into sea. Gray's target was the destroyer Amakusa; it sank in under five minutes with the loss of 157 lives. Only weeks earlier Gray had been awarded the DSC for gallantry in the sinking of a Japanese destroyer near Tokyo on 28 July. The award was not announced until 21 August when the notice appeared in the London Gazette with the citation for "For determination and address in air attacks on targets in Japan." Hammy Gray's courageous fighting spirit and inspirational leadership epitomised the bravery and resilience of the Fleet Air Arm in the Pacific. His posthumous award of the Victoria Cross was announced by the Admiralty on 12 November 1945.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Women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service calculating artillery ranges during WW2, 1942.

WOMEN AT WAR

It is true that at the outbreak of war women were told to stick to their jobs and their homes. But the official line changed in I940 when the immensely practical trade union leader Ernest Bevin became minister of labour. He called on Britain's women to take part in the industrial effort, saying that women made a 'tremendous contribution to winning the last war and will be equally effective in this struggle'.

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It took people a while to get used to the idea, but Bevin was right. In December I941 conscription was introduced for unmarried women between the ages of I8 and 30. They had the choice of going into the women's services, civil defence or industry. Doris White, an apprentice seamstress, chose industry, which in practice meant munitions. She went to work in an aircraft factory. "At first I was really shy,"she said. "I had never worked with men before. But I became as interested in mending planes as I had once been in making dresses."

Kitty Murphy was I8 when she began work in the 'danger buildings' at Woolwich Arsenal. Her job was putting the caps on the detonators of bullets: "It was dangerous. You had to wear special clothing and no jewellery except for a wedding ring, because the cordite used to fly up into your face. It caused a rash, impetigo, and it would come up in big lumps. Your eyes swelled up. It was very good money. I was earning £10 a week with danger money, but you earned every penny."

Mona Marshall, a nursemaid from Lincoln, became a steelworker in Sheffield where she cut shell cases: "The machines we were using were obsolete. On my first night shift, a red hot steel shaving hit me straight across the face. It loosened my teeth and blood just gushed out. I was at a hospital being stitched up for about an hour, and I went back to work the next night black and blue and hardly able to open my mouth." The women knew that they were one end of a production line that led all the way to the battlefront - and they were proud of it. "I felt that every time I made a rivet hot and the riveter put it in that I was nailing Hitler,"said Vi Maxwell, a 'rivet boy' in a Royal Navy dockyard.

Even the government was impressed by women's enthusiasm for war work. Clement Attlee, deputy prime minister, expressed utter amazement at the success of his own regime's policy: 'Precision engineering, which only a few years ago would have made a skilled turner's hair stand on end, is now being performed with dead accuracy by girls,' he said. But women were not always welcomed.

Many men workers felt that the factory floor was as inalienable a male preserve as the public bar, and anyway, as one factory manager said, to take on women apprentices

was against union rules. But attitudes inevitably changed. “They’re all good workers,”said one Birmingham foreman. “If any of them feel bad or faint, I send them to the ambulance room. I believe in letting them sit down and rest for 10 minutes - on this heavy work they get tired. Afterwards they get up and work twice as well.” That was a rare instance of gentle treatment.

By 1943 women had proved that there were few jobs they could not do as well as men. More than 100,000 women worked on the railways and not just as porters, carriage cleaners and ticket collectors, but as mechanics and plate layers in railway workshops. Another 100,000 were employed by the post office as motorcycle messengers and cable repairers.

Women in the forces showed that they could match their male colleagues in courage and stamina. A 1942 booklet for Gls entering Britain warned the men to treat women officers with respect: ‘There isn’t a single record of any British woman in uniformed service quitting her post or failing in her duty under fire. When you see a girl in uniform with a bit of ribbon on her tunic, remember she didn’t get it for knitting more socks than anyone else in Ipswich.’

The value placed on women in the workplace did not bring them equal pay. Throughout the war women workers earned considerably less than men. In I942 a male textile worker could expect to earn £4 4s, while a woman took home just £2 3s. “We used to argue and complain but it didn’t get us anywhere,” recalled ‘Mickey’ Lewis. “Wages were important, but it was more important to get the work done.”

Aircraft worker Barbara Davies agreed: “Nobody seemed to mind because before the war no one had equal pay anyway. You just accepted it. It was more money than I had ever earned and it didn’t occur to you to complain.”

More galling was the fact that women, unlike their male colleagues, did not end their day’s work when the factory whistle blew. “It didn’t seem to dawn on the government that any woman in war work had really two jobs,’ remarked Elaine Burton. “She had to do her shopping, and the shops were closed when you finished work.” But by the end of I941, Bevin’s ministry had acknowledged the problem, and was asking employers to allow women to work shorter shifts and take time off for shopping. Some factories also provided créches and staff canteens for their working mothers.

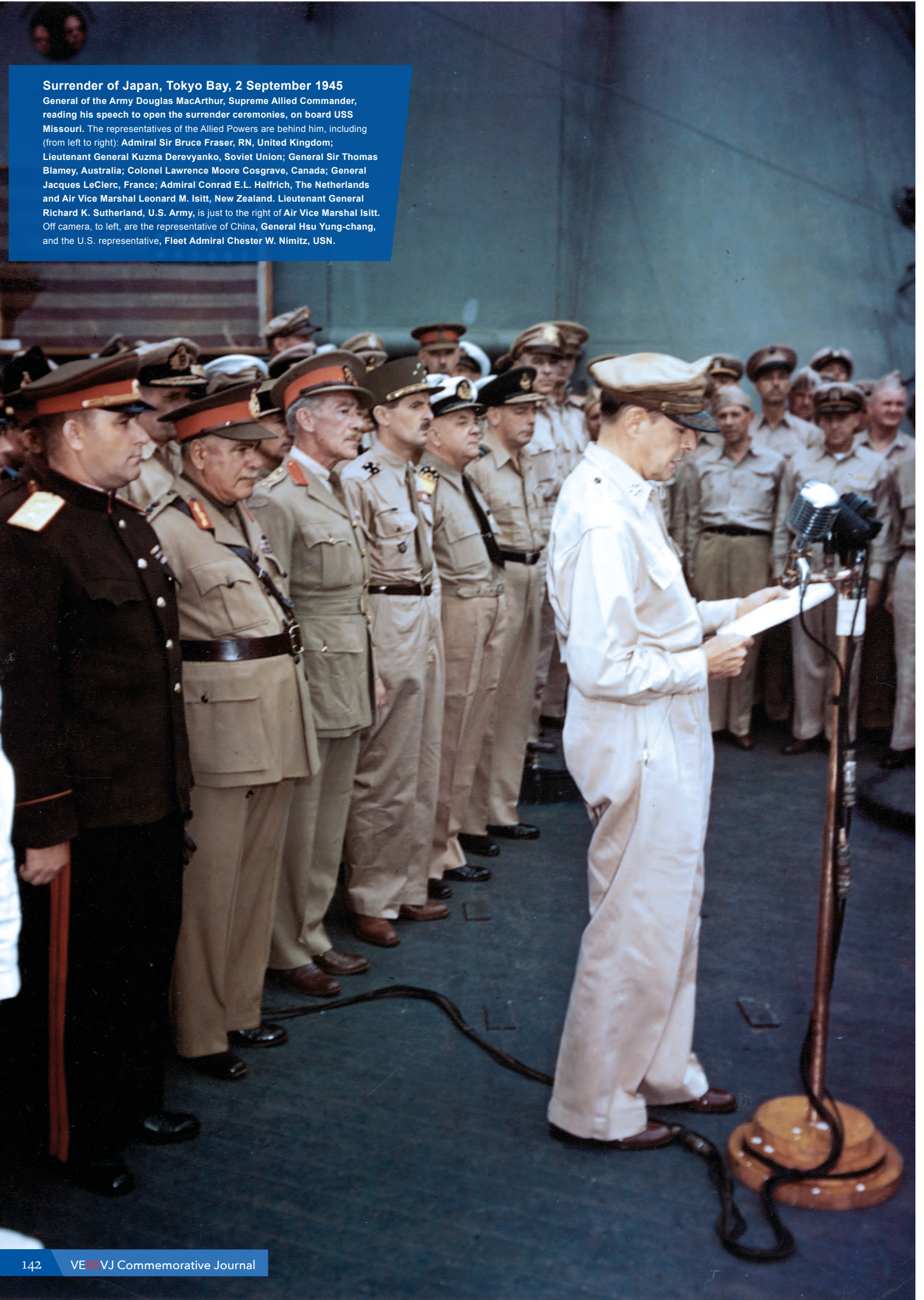
Despite these problems, many women relished the sense of freedom that came with a meaningful job and solid income. Mona Marshall thought “the war was the best thing that happened to us. My generation had been

Princess Elizabeth in 1945, the year she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service

taught to do as we were told. At work you did as your boss told you and you went home to do what your husband told you. The war changed all that. It made me stand on my own two feet.” Millions felt the same. “The war did women a good turn,” thought Hetty Fowler, who left her chip shop to join the ambulance service.

“They found out there were lots of jobs they could do just as well as a man. Women had never thought like that before.” It was a lesson they were not about to forget once the war was over.

Female welders make pump handles at the beginning of The War, 1939.



Surrender of Japan, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945
General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander, reading his speech to open the surrender ceremonies, on board USS Missouri. The representatives of the Allied Powers are behind him, including (from left to right): **Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, RN, United Kingdom; Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko, Soviet Union; General Sir Thomas Blamey, Australia; Colonel Lawrence Moore Cosgrave, Canada; General Jacques LeClerc, France; Admiral Conrad E.L. Helfrich, The Netherlands and Air Vice Marshal Leonard M. Isitt, New Zealand. Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, U.S. Army,** is just to the right of **Air Vice Marshal Isitt.** Off camera, to left, are the representative of China, **General Hsu Yung-chang,** and the U.S. representative, **Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN.**

VJ DAY: BRITAIN'S FINAL HOUR OF WAR

Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Japan

Eighty years ago Big Ben tolled on 15 August 1945, its chimes signalled something far greater than the passage of time - they marked the end of the most devastating conflict the British people had ever known. Victory over Japan Day, or VJ Day, was not merely a national relief but a profound and humbling close to six years of sacrifice, fear, and unwavering endurance.

For the people of Britain, the final act of the Second World War brought a curious blend of emotions. The euphoria that erupted across towns and cities was tempered by fatigue and loss. VE Day had come in May with dancing in the streets, but VJ Day - despite marking the definitive end of the war - carried a quieter, more contemplative tone. The shadow of the Blitz still lingered in rubble-strewn streets; ration books remained in every household; and the nation, though victorious, had been drained to its marrow.

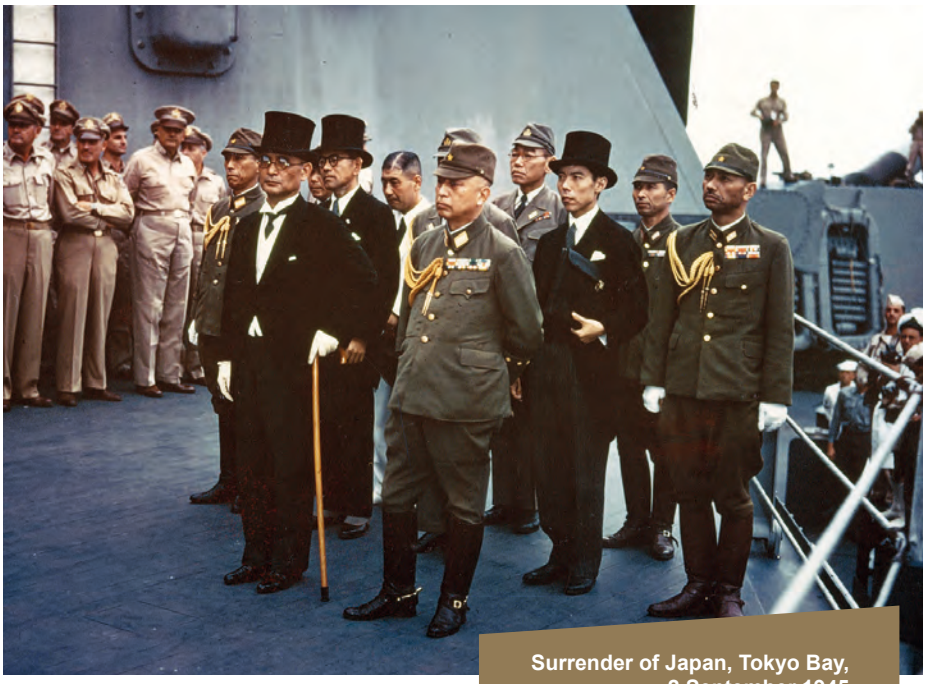
Private Norman Crookes, British Army, Burma Campaign: *"We weren't the Forgotten Army to each other. We knew what we'd done. We knew what it cost."*

Yet Britain had not endured this struggle alone. The victory declared on 15 August was not merely Britain's - it belonged to a vast, diverse, and far-reaching empire. The Commonwealth and colonial forces had stood shoulder to shoulder with British troops throughout the conflict and nowhere was this more evident than in the Far East campaign.

By the summer of 1945, British soldiers were still engaged in brutal fighting across Burma, Malaya, and Borneo. The so-called "Forgotten Army" - a name more apt for the way history treated them than for their actions - comprised troops from the British Isles as well as India, Africa, and the Caribbean. They battled not only Japanese forces, but monsoons, disease, and some of the harshest terrain on earth.

India alone contributed over 2.5 million men to the Allied cause, many of whom fought under British command. From Sikh regiments trudging through jungle trails to Gurkhas launching bayonet charges on enemy positions, their courage was undeniable. West African divisions hauled artillery through Burmese swamps, and Caribbean volunteers filled vital roles in logistics, engineering, and aviation. While the Union Jack flew in triumph on VJ Day, it was stitched from the threads of every soldier who had borne the Crown's colours.

The war's conclusion came swiftly and terribly. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced a reckoning in Tokyo. On 15 August, Emperor Hirohito's voice crackled over Japanese radio - an unprecedented event - announcing the acceptance of terms.



Surrender of Japan, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945

Representatives of the Empire of Japan on board USS Missouri (BB-63) during the surrender ceremonies. Standing in front are: **Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu (wearing top hat) and General Yoshijirō Umezu, Chief of the Army General Staff.** Behind them are three representatives each of the Foreign Ministry, the Army and the Navy. They include, in middle row, left to right: **Lieutenant General Shūichi Miyakazi, Army; Katsuo Okazaki, Foreign Ministry; Rear Admiral Tadatoshi Tomioka, Navy; Toshikazu Kase, Foreign Ministry, and Major General Yatsuji Nagai, Army.** In the back row, left to right (not all are visible): **Rear Admiral Ichirō Yokoyama, Navy; Saburo Ōta, Foreign Ministry; Katsuo Shiba, Navy, and Kazushi Sugita, Army.**

Japanese Soldiers surrender unconditionally in Hong Kong

Though the formal surrender wouldn't be signed until 2 September, the fighting was effectively over.

In Britain, Prime Minister Clement Attlee took to the airwaves, solemn and resolute: "Today the last of our enemies is laid low. Peace has once again come to the world. Let us remember those who will not come back."

Church bells rang out. Crowds gathered again at Buckingham Palace, this time without the riotous joy seen in May. It was a day of mourning as much as it was of relief. So many British families had lost sons and daughters not just in Europe, but in distant campaigns across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Thousands more awaited news from prison camps - some still unaware that their loved ones were among the survivors.

Perhaps nowhere was the cost of war more evident than among those liberated from Japanese captivity. British and Commonwealth PoWs, held in appalling conditions from Java to Thailand, emerged skeletal and broken. Survivors of the Burma Railway, Changi Prison, and the Sandakan marches bore physical and emotional scars that could never fully heal. For them, VJ Day was a moment suspended between survival and mourning.

King George VI addressed the Empire with measured grace: "Our hearts are full to overflowing... Let us strive without ceasing to make the future worthy of their sacrifice."

As Britain looked to rebuild, so too did the wider Commonwealth. Many returning servicemen from the colonies came home to societies on the cusp of independence movements and political transformation. Their war service had been real, their sacrifice immense, but their post-war world would be one of both new opportunity and lingering inequality. The British government acknowledged their role on VJ Day, but history would often speak too softly of their contributions.

Sergeant Roy Welland, Royal Signals *(Far East Prisoner of War): "We were skeletons, but we were alive. When they told us the war was over, we didn't cheer - we just sat in silence. It was too big to take in."*

Japanese Surrender in Malaya, 1945
Men of the 25th Indian Division at Kuala Lumpur search Japanese prisoners soon after they had been disarmed. Copyright © IWM (IND 4848)

PoWs Liberated
Once Japan had finally surrendered Prisoners of War had to wait several days in their camps before they could be evacuated.

Still, the bonds forged in war left enduring marks. The RAF pilot from Kingston, Jamaica, and the infantryman from Cardiff; the Indian sapper laying mines in Mandalay and the London nurse tending the wounded in Rangoon - all fought under a shared banner. VJ Day, then, was not just a British moment. It was a culmination of global cooperation in pursuit of peace.

As we reflect on this 80th Anniversary, our responsibility is dual: to remember what was won and to honour how it was won. Not solely by might, but by shared sacrifice. Not only with parades, but with thoughtful remembrance.

In the fading photographs of the crowds gathered outside Westminster Abbey; in the stoic gaze of veterans wearing medals from Arakan or Imphal; in the hymns sung at village churches and garrison chapels - we find the true legacy of VJ Day.

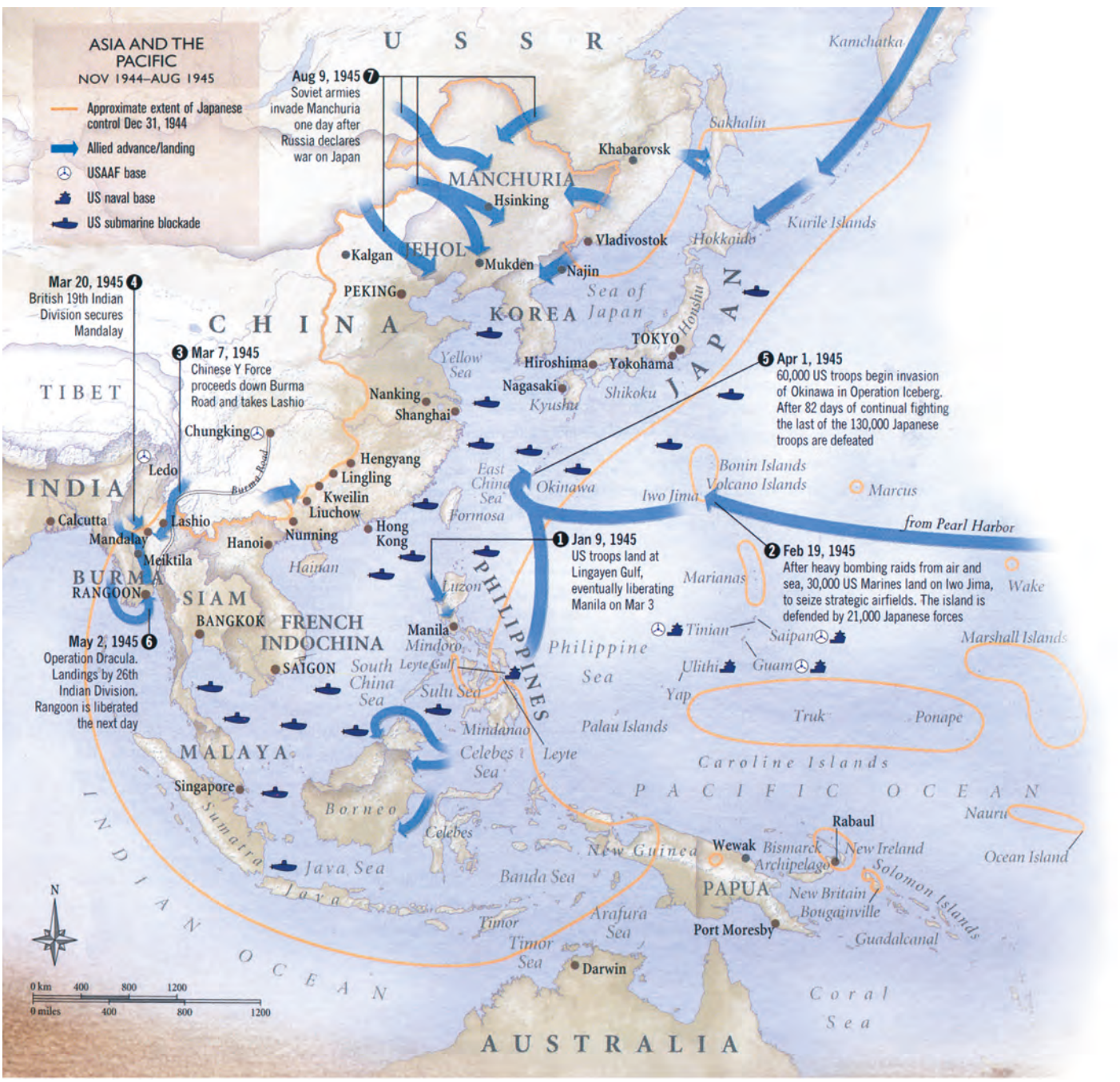
It is not of conquest, but of endurance. Not of empire, but of unity in adversity. And as the last veterans leave us, the baton of memory now falls to those of us who must remember on their behalf.

ASIA & THE PACIFIC

January 9th - September 12th, 1945

In the final months of the Pacific war landings took place on Iowa Jima and the Philippines, while the British forced the Japanese out of Burma.

The fire-bombing of Tokyo started in March. Japan surrenders after the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



JANUARY 9th

US landings on Luzon, Philippines, part of Operation MIKE.

FEBRUARY 19th

US landings on Iwo Jima, which was strategically important due to its two airfields.

MARCH 10th

Fire-storm raid on Tokyo, codenamed 'Operation Meetinghouse.'

MARCH 21st

Mandalay cleared by British, Indian and Gurkha troops. Japan facing certain defeated in Burma.

APRIL 1st

more than 60,000 soldiers and marines of the US Tenth Army stormed ashore at Okinawa

MAY 3rd

British occupy Rangoon, primarily through the joint amphibious and airborne Operation Dracula.

MAY 11th

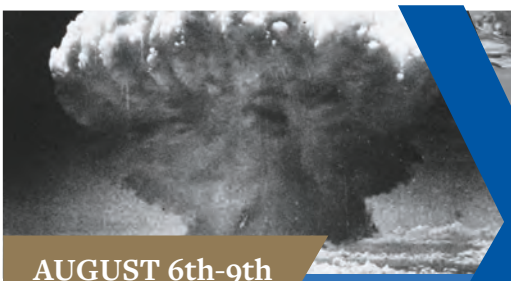
Australian landings at Dove Bay New Guinea. 623 men of the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment.

MAY 27th

Naha, capital of Okinawa secured by the U.S. Army 77th Infantry Division.

JULY 24th

Kure naval base attacked by 1,747 US carrier aircraft.



AUGUST 6th-9th

Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima & Nagasaki.

AUGUST 11th

Soviet forces invade North Korea attacking Unggi and Najin.

AUGUST 15th

Emperor Hirohito broadcasts surrender to his people, but some fighting continues.

AUGUST 28th

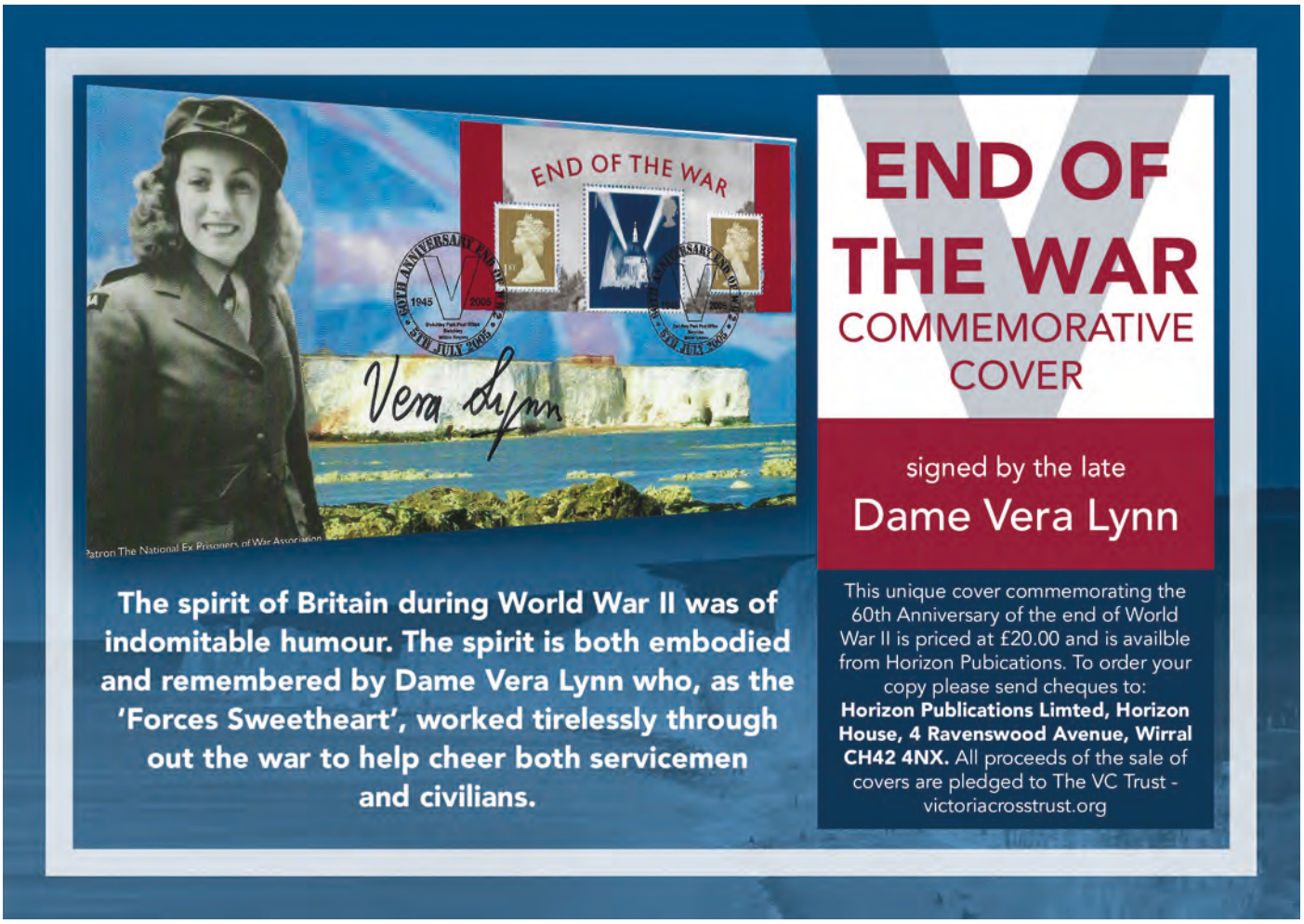
First US forces reach Japan. 150 US personnel flew to Atsugi, Kanagawa Prefecture.

SEPTEMBER 2nd

Formal surrender of Japan at 9:04 in the morning aboard USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

SEPTEMBER 12th

Formal surrender of Japanese forces in southeast Asia at the Imperial War Museum in Singapore.



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COMMEMORATIVE COVER

signed by the late
Dame Vera Lynn

The spirit of Britain during World War II was of indomitable humour. The spirit is both embodied and remembered by Dame Vera Lynn who, as the 'Forces Sweetheart', worked tirelessly through out the war to help cheer both servicemen and civilians.

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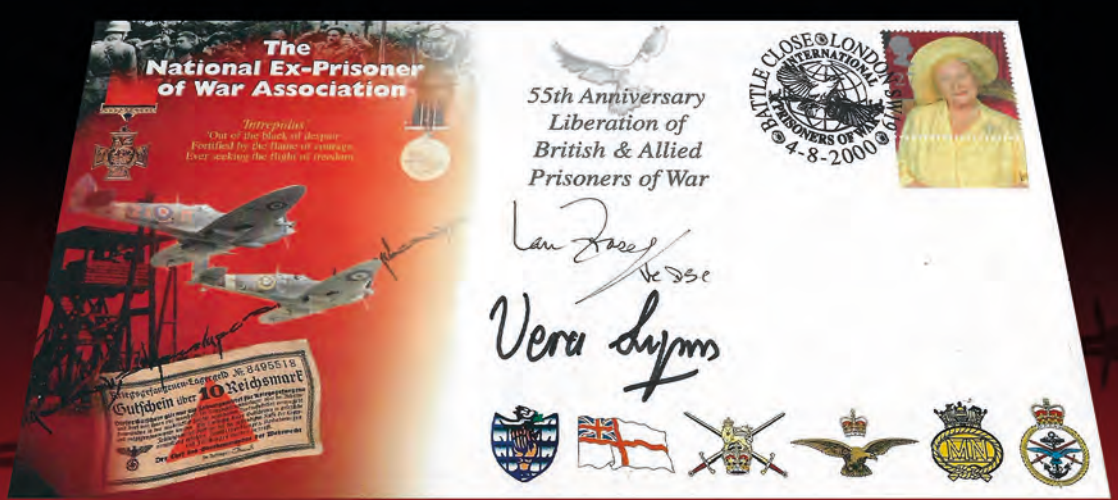

THE NATIONAL EX-PRISONERS OF WAR ASSOCIATION
55th ANNIVERSARY LIBERATION OF BRITISH & ALLIED POWs COMMEMORATIVE COVER

signed by the **late Ian Fraser VC** & **Dame Vera Lynn**

This cover, originally printed in 2000, commemorates the 55th Anniversary of the release of British and Allied Prisoners of War at the end of World War II.

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Men of the 36th Infantry Division advance through a banana grove, 6 November 1944. Copyright © IWM (SE 2551)

THE FORGOTTEN ARMY

From desperate defence of India to victory in Burma

The British colonial possession of Burma was a rich prize for the Japanese - partly for its oil, rice and rubber, partly as a stepping stone westward into India, partly as a buffer against the Chinese in the north. Within a week of their initial attacks across southeast Asia on 8 December 1941 the Japanese had reached Burma, and after air raids on the Burmese capital, Rangoon, they began invading from Siam early in 1942.

British and Indian forces in Burma included elements of the 17th Indian Infantry Division – Jats, Rajputs and Gurkhas were involved, among many others from the Indian subcontinent. The Indian, British and Burmese troops were forced to commence a long withdrawal. At one point, thanks to the premature demolition of a bridge across the Sittang River, half the 17th Indian Division found itself marooned on the wrong side of the river. Most of the men managed to reach safety, but all their equipment was lost.

By 9 March the Japanese had captured Rangoon. In April they crushed the Chinese, in May they pushed the Allied British and Indian forces back into India. By the end of 1942 the Japanese had consolidated their position in Burma - one of the most difficult places on earth to fight in with its thick jungles, razorback mountains, steep wild valleys and plethora of debilitating and deadly tropical diseases. Recapturing the country would take the Allies' 14th Army – known with bitterly

The commander of the Japanese 52nd Division gives a final order to his officers before they head for a prisoner of war camp after surrendering to the 1/10th Gurkha Rifles of the 17th Indian Copyright: © IWM (SE 4914)

realistic humour as the 'Forgotten Army' - three years of desperate fighting.

The 14th Army, under its Commander General Sir William Slim, was the Second World War's largest Army of Commonwealth troops. It had nearly a million men in its service by late 1944. At different periods of the war four corps (IV, XV, XXXIII and XXXIV) were under its control, and at various times a total of thirteen divisions – the 5th, 7th, 17th, 19th, 20th, 23rd, 25th and 26th Indian Divisions, the 11th East African Division, the 81st and 82nd West African Divisions, and the 2nd and 36th British Divisions.

Late in 1942 a preliminary Allied offensive was launched from India into the Arakan peninsula in north-west Burma. The 14th Indian Division was among the forces that advanced into the Arakan and down the Mayu range of hills between the Kalapanzin River and the Arakan coast. But in spite of attacks against the Japanese early in 1943, the offensive ended in failure. This was the occasion on which the Chindits, desperadoes bent on sabotage, infiltrated deep behind enemy lines for the first time. They lost one in three of their number.

At the start of the dry season in early 1944 the 14th Army launched a second offensive into Arakan. The Indian Air Force supported this offensive, with No 6 Squadron among those in the thick of the action in February against Japanese 'Oscar' fighters. The Indian contingent of ground troops included the 5th and 25th Indian Divisions. In the Mayu hills the 5th tried and failed to capture Hill 551, a vital strongpoint which commanded a section of the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road between two tunnels. It was the 25th Indian Division that accomplished the task in February, during a final attack in which a Gurkha battalion assaulted and captured strong Japanese fortifications.

The Indians and Gurkhas were not the only non-British Allied troops to distinguish themselves. The 81st West African Division – later reinforced by the 82nd West African Division - comprised men from the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The 11th East African Division incorporated battalions of the King's African Rifles and other forces from Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland (now Malawi), Somaliland (Somalia) and Tanganyika (Tanzania). These Africans - considered by some of their own British officers to have been undervalued and underused as front-line troops by the British commanders – proved extremely hardy and tenacious in several battles, both as combatant soldiers and as medical staff, carriers and other auxiliary participants.

ARAKAN

Almost simultaneously with the start of the second Allied offensive into Arakan, the Japanese launched an offensive of their own. A diversionary thrust in Arakan, codenamed Ha-Go, drew attention away from the main U-Go offensive westward by 80,000 Japanese troops into the north-eastern Indian province of Assam. The hill settlements of Imphal and Kohima lay in their path, and were to prove their stumbling blocks.

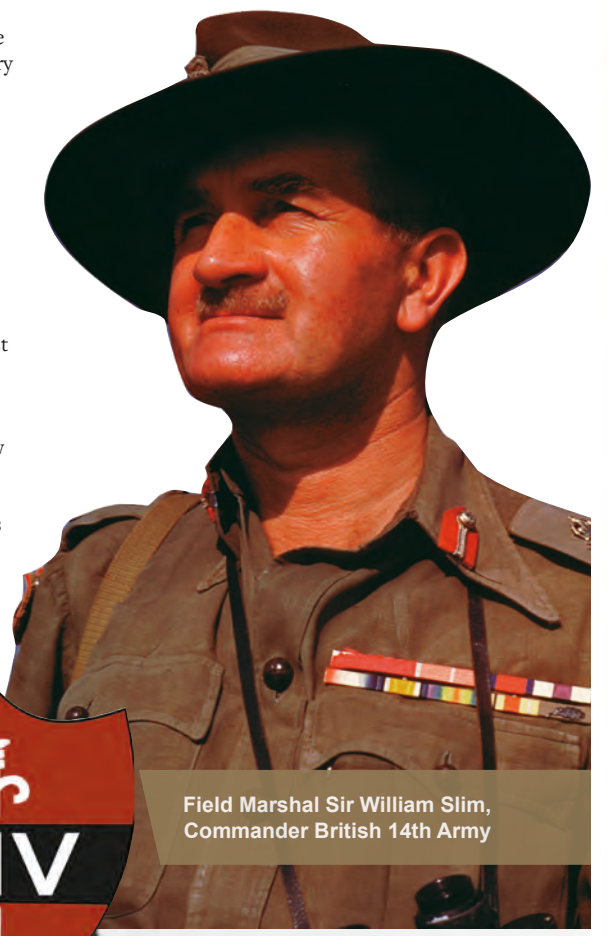
By February 1944 the 2,000 defenders of Kohima were besieged; those at Imphal surrounded. But General Sir William Slim's 14th Army resisted countless Japanese attacks, often in the grimmest of hand-to-hand fighting. Kohima was besieged for 64 days of intense fighting, with the Japanese occupying all the heights but one around the town. The famous Battle of the Tennis Court saw Allied and Japanese soldiers exchanging grenade and small-arms fire from positions separated only by the width of the District Commissioner's tennis court. Most of the medical staff were Indians, working in appaling conditions – at one point they had to launch a raid on the Japanese stores to secure medical supplies.

The siege was initially relieved on 19 April. In May the 7th Indian Division arrived as reinforcements, and it was Indians and Gurkhas who succeeded in taking the strategically essential high point of Church Knoll from the Japanese.

Continued on Page 152

IMPHAL-KOHIMA

The town of Imphal possessed important airfields, and for three months the Japanese held the Imphal-Kohima road while they tried to over-run Imphal. On 30 March the siege began, a few days before the 17th Indian Division reached the plain surrounding Imphal after a fighting withdrawal that had lasted three weeks. The 17th were soon in action, fighting the Japanese south-west of Imphal. The 5th Indian Division met the first Japanese attacks, and it was the 23rd Indian Division that experienced some of the worst fighting in May.



Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Commander British 14th Army

Gurkhas clearing enemy positions on 'Scraggy' hill near Imphal, April 1944. The battle was reminiscent of the worst fighting on the Somme during World War One. NAM. 1998-01-154-5

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Stat lux In Monte - on a hill stands a light

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The Slim Society membership comprises British & Commonwealth former students who attended Slim School, Cameron Highlands, Malaya.
Our fathers were mostly members of the Armed Forces who served throughout Malaya.

We are privileged to have this opportunity to remember their service with pride and to record our support and gratitude to those who secured peace in the Far East Theatre.

CLASS OF 1962

CLASS OF 1963

The Royal Air Force aiding Gurkhas during an attack on a hill near Palel, April 1944 Gurkha soldiers of the Indian Army open fire with a Vickers machine-gun while in the distance aircraft of the Royal Air Force strike at Japanese positions on the road to Imphal NAM. 1998-01-154-19

However, counter-attacks began to turn into solid advances. On 22 June the 5th Indian Division met the British 2nd Division on the Kohima-Imphal road, which was reopened to end the siege.

It was air supply that had kept both sets of defenders in the game. By June the Japanese U-Go offensive had come to a halt. Around 12,000 Indian casualties had been sustained, out of a total of almost 18,000 Allied killed, wounded and missing. Of nearly 100,000 Japanese soldiers who took part in the U-Go offensive, only about 20,000 recrossed the River Chindwin unscathed. Some 30,000 had been killed in battle, and another 23,000 were wounded or fell victim to disease. The rest of the year was spent chasing the Japanese back through the jungles of Burma. The 82nd West African Division played a vital part here in front-line combat and as carriers. The Askaris or soldiers of 11 East African Division, which included the Kenyans and the Ugandans of the King's African Rifles, proved notable jungle fighters, especially in the notoriously disease-ridden Kabaw Valley ('Death Valley') near the Indian border towards the end of 1944. The Gurkhas of Nepal fought extremely bravely in the Burmese jungle - some as attack infantry, others as expert forward patrols and snipers.

To You The English Soldiers!

You are like fishes caught in a net, without an outlet. The only faith left for you is Death alone. When we think and give consideration about your loving wives, parents and brothers we could never carry on inhuman-like actions. Therefore stop your useless resistance. Throw down your arms, and surrender. It is then that we will guarantee your lives and will treat you according to the International Law.

How to Surrender to the Jpanese Forces

1. The surrenderers are required to come hoisting some white cloth or holding up both hands.
2. Carry the rifle on the shoulder upside down.
3. Show this bill to the Japanese soldier.

Nippon Army.

此ノ證携行者ハ投降者ニツキ保護ヲ加ヘラレクシ

大日本軍

Japanese surrender leaflet dropped on Kohima, 1944

Kangaw was taken by 51 Brigade of the 25th Indian Division. Mandalay itself fell on 19 March to the 19th Indian Division. On 1 May Indian paratroops landed to the south of Rangoon; the following day saw unopposed amphibious attacks into the city. By 3 May the Burmese capital – along with most of the country - was back in Allied hands.

Though Burma saw the majority of the fighting, India herself became a vast supply and training base during the war, as well as a launching point for air, sea and land offensives against the Japanese. India's southerly island neighbour, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), also became a base for Allied operations, particularly for naval forces based on the two great harbours of Trincomalee and Colombo. On 5 April 1942, Colombo was attacked by over 300 aircraft from Japanese carriers. Although they failed to find the British ships – which had been moved to Adalu Atoll, 600 miles south of Ceylon – they did enormous damage. Later, Japanese dive-bombers attacked and sank the aircraft carrier Hermes, as well as the cruisers Cornwall and Dorsetshire.

Hard battles remained to be fought as the remnants of three Japanese armies were caught between liberated Mandalay and Rangoon, but Japanese power in Burma was forever broken.

The mild-mannered and humble William Slim had remade a defeated army into the best-trained, most professional force in the British Empire. By the end of the Burma campaign the officers and men of the British 14th Army -British, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Gurkha, African - were experts in jungle warfare capable of active defense and aggressive offense. They were specialists in deep penetration and close air support who could use combined arms to overwhelm fanatical Japanese defenders.

23rd Division troops inspect captured Japanese ordnance, Imphal, 1944. NAM. 1998-01-154-6

MANDALAY ITSELF FELL

In December 1944 the 14th Army launched its third and decisive Arakan offensive. The 11th East African Division advance to the River Chindwin, capturing the town of Kalewa. The key port of Akyab was secured by the Indian 25th Division in January 1945. On the 14th of that month the 19th Indian Division crossed the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay, and a month later the 20th Indian Division got across south of the city.

THE FORGOTTEN AIR FORCE

A Hurricane Pilot's Story : Warrant Officer Peter Thomas Holloway

by Robert Westbrook, Museum Manager, Spitfire & Hurricane Memorial Museum

One of the most recent acquisitions for the Spitfire & Hurricane Memorial Museum's Collection is the flying logbook and escape map belonging to Warrant Officer Peter Thomas Holloway. This acquisition fills a gap in our collection and allows us to commemorate the pilots and ground crew who served in the Far East.

Peter trained as a pilot in America completing his elementary training on the venerable Boeing Stearman and service flying training on the BT 13 and Harvard. After completion of his training, he was posted to India.

Following his arrival in India Peter flew Hurricane Mk IICs & Mk IVs in the close air support role with 42 Squadron from bases around Imphal. Peter had joined 42 after partially completing a course on Hurricanes at the Specialised Low Attack Instructors School at Ranchi, India in June 1944.

By this time the Hurricane was outclassed as a fighter in the European theatre but was ideally suited to operating from forward bases with the RAF Third Tactical Air Force.. It had earned a reputation as a very rugged aircraft that could take a great deal of punishment.

Peter's first operational flight with 42 Squadron was on July 27th 1944 carrying out a sector reconnaissance in Hurricane Mk IV **KX802** coded **AW – D**. He flew a total of 157 operational sorties totalling some 205 hours flight time. He made his final flight with 42 in a Hurricane IIC on the 23rd May 1945.

As part of their close air support role 42 were called upon to carry out varied ground attack missions in support of their army colleagues. Peter recalled in his memoirs *"one of the squadron's specialities was bridge-busting. The Japs would build a bridge over a gorge and we would keep our eyes on how work was progressing. Immediately we thought it was completed, we would request a mission to knock it down".*

Peter also recalled sometimes being called upon to fly up to four sorties a day undertaking varied tasks such as bombing, strafing or carrying out rocket attacks. One of the more unusual roles he was tasked with was carrying out supply drops to small groups of allied troops behind the Japanese lines. One particularly memorable supply mission was carried out on the 30th December 1944. These missions were normally carried out in pairs with one aircraft carrying supplies and the second aircraft providing cover. On the 30th Peter's No. 2, Flight Sergeant Ray Shaw, also had to carry two 270 lb drop containers of supplies to another patrol. Shaw's aircraft was overdue for major maintenance and he experienced great difficulty in keeping up with the lead aircraft. He wrote of the aircraft in his report *"This would be its last trip before it was flown back to India for a major overhaul and to be fitted with a new engine. Very few aircraft lasted so long, the adverse flying conditions usually wore out the engines long before the theoretical replacement times."*

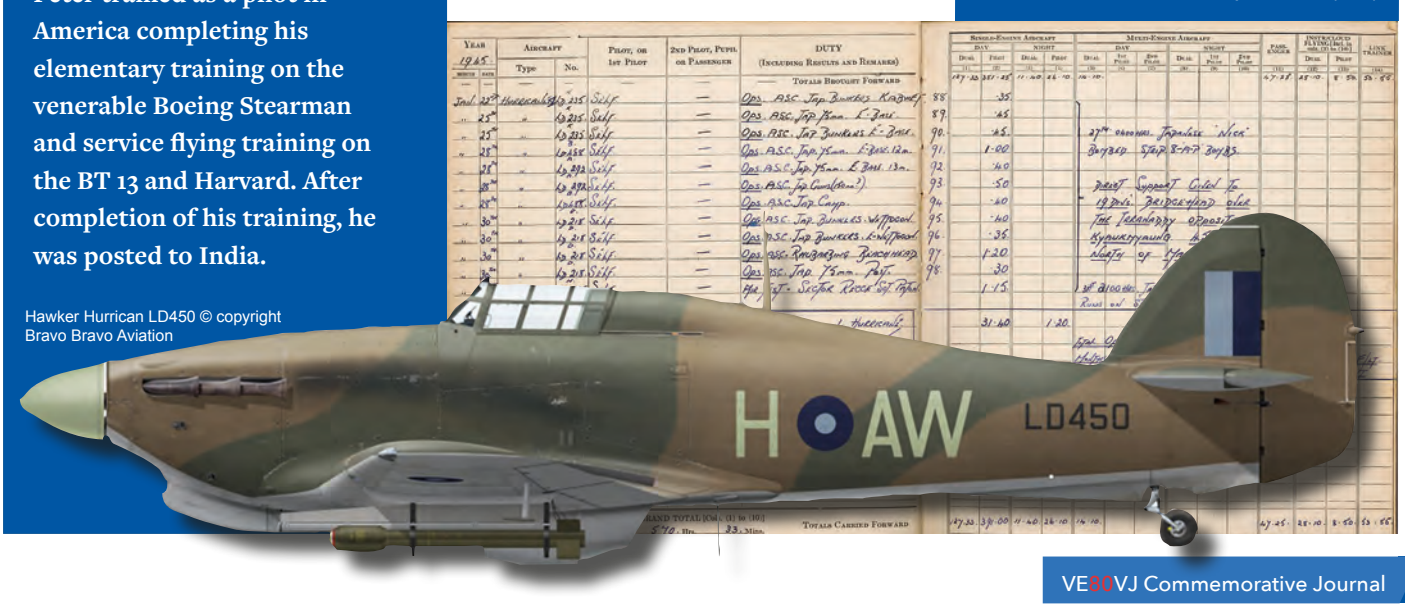
The pair, flying at 250ft, eventually made their supply drop but had difficulty locating the second group and Shaw expressed concern for the men on the ground in his report:

"I have since wondered if the second patrol realised how close they were to missing their supplies; it must have been a chance in a million to spot them as I did. What were they doing in this remote part of Burma and why didn't they show themselves sooner when they failed to attract our attention? Were the Japs close on their heels and did they survive. I shall probably never know the answers."

It is vitally important that this chapter in the Hurricane's history is remembered along with the service and sacrifice of the men who carried out these most dangerous operations in an extremely hostile environment.

Peter's log book, escape map and a model of one of the hurricanes he flew will be on display at the museum later this year.

Below:
Peter Holloway's flying logbook and a *Mk IV* Hawker Hurricane LD450 in tropical colours from 42 Squadron RAF, Tulihal Airfield, Imphal, Burma (1944).



Hawker Hurrican LD450 © copyright
Bravo Bravo Aviation

FOR VALOUR

Courage in the Forgotten War: Victoria Cross Heroes of the Burma Campaign

Name	Regiment	Date	Place
Parkash Singh	8th Punjab Regiment	06/01/43	Donbaik
Gaje Ghale	5th Royal Gurkha Rifles	24/05/43	Chin Hills
Alec Horwood	Queen's Royal Regiment	18-20/01/1944	Kyauchaw
Charles Hoey	Lincolnshire Regiment	16 February 1944	Ngakyedauk Pass
Nand Singh	11th Sikh Regiment	11-12/03/1944	Maungdaw-Buthidaung Road
George Cairns	South Staffordshire Regiment	13/03/1944	Henu Block
Abdul Hafiz	9th Jat Regiment	06/04/1944	Imphal
John Harman	Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment	08-09/04/1944	Kohima
John Randle	Royal Norfolk Regiment	04-06/05/1944	Kohima
Hanson Turner	West Yorkshire Regiment	06-07 /06/1944	Ningthoukhong
Ganju Lama	7th Gurkha Rifles	12/06/44	Ningthoukhong
Michael Allmand	6th Gurkha Rifles	23/06/1944	Pin Hmi Road Bridge
Tulbahadur Pun	6th Gurkha Rifles	23/06/44	Mogaung
Netrabahadur Thapa	5th Royal Gurkha Rifles	25-26 /06/944	Bishenpur
Agansing Rai	5th Royal Gurkha Rifles	26/06/44	Bishenpur
Frank Blaker	9th Gurkha Rifles	09/07/1944	Taunggyi
Ram Singh	1st Punjab Regiment	25/10/1944	Tiddim
Bhandari Ram	10th Baluch Regiment	22/11/44	Arakan
Umrao Singh	Royal Indian Artillery	15-16/12/1944	Kaladan Valley
Sher Shah Awan	16th Punjab Regiment	19-20/01/1945	Kyeyebyin
George Knowland	No. 1 Commando	31/01/1945	Kangaw
Parkash Singh Chib	13th Frontier Force Rifles	16-17/02/1945	Kanlan Ywathit
Fazal Din	10th Baluch Regiment	02/03/1945	Meiktila
Gian Singh	15th Punjab Regiment	02/03/45	Myingyan
Basil Weston	Green Howards	03/03/1945	Meiktila
Bhanbhakta Gurung	2nd Gurkha Rifles	05/03/45	Tamandu
Karamjeet Singh Judge	15th Punjab Regiment	18/03/1945	Meiktila
Claud Raymond	Corps of Royal Engineers	21/03/1945	Talaku
Lachhiman Gurung	8th Gurkha Rifles	12-13/05/1945	Taungdaw

Awarded Posthumously

VICTORIA CROSS TRUST

The Victoria Cross Trust is a small charity with a big name. Made up of volunteers many of whom are veterans, raise funds to clean and restore graves and memorials of Victoria Cross recipients. The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest award for valour, and it is only right that the recipients of such a prestigious award are remembered, and their memorials maintained to the highest standards.

Whilst there are numerous VC recipients buried in Commonwealth War Graves that are maintained regularly by the commission, there are at least the same number in private graves that are not so well looked after. This is where the Victoria Cross Trust steps in and cleans and restores those memorials alongside the graves of other military personnel. All funds are raised by the volunteers and last year the team who are members of the **British Register for Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM),** completed over 100 restorations. These ranged from cleaning with their heritage approved equipment or rebuilding and repining headstones that had become damaged.

In September 2024 the team visited the Isle Wight and cleaned and restored 31 memorials in three days. These included the graves of **Henry Tombs VC, Henry Gore-Brown VC, George Cairns VC (memorial) William Rickard VC and Samuel Browne VC.**

Whilst he lays at rest in Burma, a headstone memorial to **George Cairns VC** is placed in St Mary the Virgin Brighstone Isle of Wight adjacent to the village war memorial which were cleaned by the VCT. **George Cairns VC** earned his award posthumously at Henu Block Burma fighting the Japanese. His citation reads:

On the 5th of March 1944, 77 Independent Infantry Brigade, of which the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment formed a part, landed by glider at Broadway (Burma). On the 12th of March 1944, columns from the South Staffordshire Regiment and 3/6 Gurkha Rifles established a road and rail block across the Japanese lines of communication at Henu Block. The Japanese counter-attacked this position heavily in the early morning of the 13th of March 1944, and the South Staffordshire Regiment was ordered to attack a hill-top which formed the basis of the Japanese attack. During this action, in which Lieutenant Cairns took a foremost part, he was attacked by a Japanese officer, who, with his sword hacked off Lieutenant Cairns left arm. Lieutenant Cairns killed this Officer; picked up the sword and continued to lead his men in the attack and slashing left and right with the captured sword killed and wounded several Japanese before he himself fell to the ground. Lieutenant Cairns subsequently died from his wounds. His action so inspired all his comrades that, later the Japanese were completely routed, a very rare occurrence at that time.

George Cairns VC was not however, recognised formally until 1949 when his action and citation were published in The London Gazette of 17 May 1949. The citation was in the possession of General Orde Wingate when he was killed in a plane crash and so the process of awarding the VC came to an abrupt stop. According to an article in the Times published in the Times Saturday 21 May 1949:

Following the subsequent re-opening of the case the VC was awarded to **George Cairns** posthumously. The fighting was some of the fiercest experienced. He was a hero said his men and the fact that the Japanese were routed, an extremely rare event, confirmed this. It is therefore fitting that the act of valour by **George Cairns VC** is remembered on VJ Day.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD

Proudly supporting those who serve

The Victoria Cross Trust is a register charity, members of BRAMM and proud recipient of the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award for supporting veterans. A small charity with a huge name and raises funds through donations as well as sales at its shop in Doncaster. The restoration work is completed free of charge although any donations made are gratefully received. You can make a difference by donating through GoFundMe via the QR code or ustGiving via the link below.

https://donate.justgiving.com/charity/victoriacrosstrust/

Amid the thick jungles and suffocating heat of the Far East, a campaign often overlooked in popular memory forged more Victoria Cross recipients than any other theatre of the Second World War. The Burma Campaign- grinding, brutal, and waged against terrain as hostile as the enemy - became a crucible of gallantry where individual acts of heroism shone through one of the war's grimmest chapters.

Twenty nine men were awarded the Victoria Cross during the campaign, their courage etched into the legacy of the 14th Army, often dubbed "the Forgotten Army."

These soldiers were drawn from across Britain, India, and the Commonwealth, fighting not for glory but for survival, unity, and duty.

From **Captain Michael Allmand's** fearless charge through machine-gun fire on the Pin Hmi Road Bridge, to **Naik Fazal Din's** assault on a Japanese position, these were deeds that defied comprehension.

That the Burma Campaign produced the highest number of VCs speaks volumes - not merely of the scale or savagery of the fighting, but of the unique conditions under which soldiers had to find resolve.

Dense jungle hindered visibility and movement. Supplies were scarce. Disease was a persistent foe. Yet amid all this, men rose to extraordinary heights of self-sacrifice.

Too often, the story of the war in Europe dominates commemoration. But these VC recipients, many of whom never lived to wear the medal, remind us that heroism knows no hierarchy of theatres.

Their legacy calls for remembrance not just in medal rolls, but in the way we recall the human spirit under fire. The Fourteenth Army was broken up on the 2nd of December 1945.

The Burma Campaign may have been the war's "forgotten front." But the valour shown there - enduring, resolute, and quietly profound - deserves its rightful place in the annals of courage.

2nd British Division's war memorial in the Kohima War Cemetery in Nagaland, India with the famous inscription 'When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today' The verse is attributed to English poet John Maxwell Edmonds

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THE CHINDITS:

Forgotten Warriors of the Burma Campaign

In the shadowy jungles of Burma during the Second World War, amid heat, monsoon rains, dense foliage, and the constant threat of disease, a remarkable force of Allied soldiers carried out one of the most daring and unconventional military campaigns in history. Known as the *Chindits*, this special operations unit - formally the **Long Range Penetration Groups** - played a crucial and often underappreciated role in the war in South-East Asia. Their operations disrupted Japanese supply lines, gathered vital intelligence, and forced the Japanese High Command to divert critical resources. Yet despite their strategic value, the Chindits' legacy is often eclipsed by the larger battles fought in Europe or the Pacific. As we look back, it is time to properly recognise the Chindits' courageous and costly contribution to the Allied victory in Asia.

Origins and Unorthodox Strategy

The Chindits were the brainchild of Brigadier Orde Wingate, a maverick British officer who had previously commanded guerrilla forces in Palestine and Ethiopia. Wingate believed in deep-penetration warfare - striking far behind enemy lines to sabotage infrastructure, gather intelligence, and force the enemy to fight on multiple fronts. In 1942, as the Japanese Army swept through Malaya, Singapore, and Burma, threatening India, Wingate proposed the formation of a special force that could operate independently in the jungle and challenge the Japanese on their own terms.

With approval from Prime Minister Winston Churchill - who became a personal supporter of Wingate's vision - the first Chindit operation, code-named *Operation Longcloth*, was launched in February 1943. Comprising about 3,000 men, the force was air-dropped into northern Burma with mules to carry supplies and radio sets to maintain contact with headquarters in India. Although it suffered heavy casualties, the operation proved that long-range penetration in hostile terrain was possible. It also forced the Japanese to reconsider their assumption that the jungle was impassable to large Allied forces.

The name *Chindit* itself was derived from the Burmese mythical beast *Chinthe*, a lion-like creature that stood guard at the entrances of temples. It was an apt metaphor for a force that would stand defiantly against overwhelming odds.

Campaigns and Achievements

The most significant and large-scale Chindit operation was *Operation Thursday*, launched in March 1944. This time, the Chindits numbered over 20,000 men, including British, Indian, Burmese, Gurkha, and West African troops. What set *Operation Thursday* apart was the use of gliders and transport aircraft to insert entire brigades deep into enemy territory, establishing fortified bases behind Japanese lines.

The objective was to assist General Joseph Stilwell's American and Chinese forces advancing in northern Burma by disrupting Japanese supply and communication lines. Chindit columns cut railway lines, destroyed bridges, ambushed convoys, and harassed Japanese garrisons. They established strongholds with codenames like *Broadway, White City,* and *Blackpool*, each one a thorn in the side of Japanese logistics.

The Chindits' contributions significantly weakened the Japanese hold on Burma. Their operations tied down thousands of Japanese troops who might otherwise have been used to repel Stilwell's advance. This disruption helped pave the way for the re-capture of Myitkyina and eventually Rangoon. Furthermore, the Chindits provided crucial intelligence to Allied command, thanks to their extensive use of radios and coordination with the Royal Air Force, which supplied them from the air.

Despite limited manpower and primitive equipment, the Chindits demonstrated a level of resilience and ingenuity that became legendary. Operating in extreme conditions without the benefit of traditional supply lines, they relied on air drops for food, medicine, and ammunition. Injured men were often carried for days through the jungle to makeshift landing strips. Their

Major General Orde Charles Wingate, DSO & Two Bars, creator of the Chindits.

A Chindit column during *Operation Longcloth*

bravery came at a high cost: in Operation Thursday alone, more than 1,000 Chindits became casualties with more wounded or evacuated due to disease and exhaustion.

Hardship and Controversy

Life for the Chindits was brutal. The Burmese jungle was as much an enemy as the Japanese: monsoon rains turned trails into rivers of mud; dysentery, malaria, and heatstroke were rampant; leeches and mosquitoes made sleep almost impossible. Rations were limited, and dehydration was a constant threat. Many soldiers suffered psychological breakdowns after weeks of isolation and physical hardship.

Wingate's leadership, while visionary, was also controversial. He was often accused of pushing his men too hard and ignoring the mounting toll of casualties. His insistence on strict secrecy, rapid movement, and unwavering commitment to his mission led some to regard him as a reckless fanatic. Wingate died in a plane crash in March 1944 during Operation Thursday, and his death marked a turning point for the Chindits. Leadership passed to Brigadier Lentaigne, and although the campaign continued, morale suffered, and the unit was eventually disbanded in early 1945.

There is also debate among historians about the strategic value of the Chindit operations. Some argue that the effort and resources spent on deep-penetration raids could have been better used to strengthen conventional forces. Others contend that the disruption caused to the Japanese war machine, along with the psychological impact of an enemy force operating with impunity in supposedly secure areas, made the Chindits invaluable.

Diversity and Brotherhood

One of the lesser-celebrated aspects of the Chindits was the diversity of its ranks. The force was a microcosm of the British Empire, with soldiers from across the UK, India, Nepal, Africa, and Burma. In an era still marred by racial hierarchies, the Chindits operated with a rare sense of equality forged by shared hardship. Gurkhas and Indian troops fought side-by-side with British and West African soldiers, all dependent on one another for survival. The jungle, in many ways, flattened social distinctions and brought a sense of brotherhood that transcended nationality and background.

This multicultural composition also left a legacy that would influence future special operations forces, including the SAS and other modern units that rely on cooperation between diverse national and cultural groups.

Legacy and Recognition

The Chindits' contribution to the Allied victory in South-East Asia was significant, even if under-acknowledged in the post-war years. While the European theatre was commemorated with parades and monuments, the war in Burma became known as the "Forgotten War" - and the Chindits, its forgotten heroes.

However, in recent decades, there has been renewed interest in their achievements. Memorials have been erected, books and documentaries produced, and their exploits have been included in military training and education. The Chindit Memorial in London, unveiled in 1990, bears the names of the fallen and a tribute to their sacrifice.

More broadly, the Chindits helped change the way modern armies think about warfare. Their emphasis on mobility, special operations, psychological warfare, and supply by air became standard practice in conflicts ranging from Vietnam to Afghanistan. The ethos of adaptability, courage, and unconventional tactics lives on in special forces around the world.

The story of the Chindits is one of extraordinary courage, suffering, and determination. Operating in some of the most inhospitable conditions imaginable, they struck blows deep in enemy territory, challenged Japanese dominance in Burma, and helped tip the balance in favour of the Allies in the South-East Asian theatre.

Though they were disbanded before the end of the war, the Chindits left a legacy that endures. Their daring campaigns, multinational makeup, and indomitable spirit remain a testament to what can be achieved when soldiers are given a mission, the freedom to innovate, and the resolve to see it through, no matter the odds. In remembering the Chindits, we honour a group of warriors whose courage helped secure victory in a theatre too long forgotten.

A Traditional Chinthe statue from Burma

THE GURKHA BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)

6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles

7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles

10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers

Queen's Gurkha Signals

Gurkha Army Service Corps

Gurkha Military Police

Gurkha Independent Parachute Company

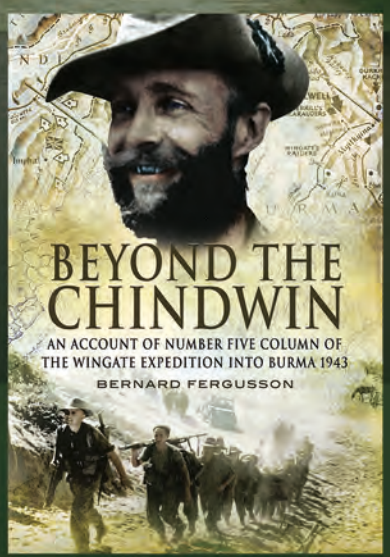
The Gurkha Brigade Association takes pride in paying tribute to those members who served with distinction in Burma at the Battles of *Imphal, Kohima, Mogaung and Tamandu* in Field Marshall Slim's 14th Army

BEYOND THE CHINDWIN

BERNARD FERGUSSON

This is an account of No. 5 Column of the Wingate Expedition into Burma, in 1943, written by its commander.

It was written only a year after the end of the story it tells and the immediacy of the narrative adds to the excitement.



Available from Pen & Sword Books
Beyond The Chindwin
ISBN: 978-0850524864

PEN & SWORD MILITARY

www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

RETURN VIA RANGOON

PHILIP STIBBE

This edition is published to mark the eightieth anniversary of the first Chindit expedition

"It has been a privilege to read Return via Rangoon which stands with his column commander's classic account Beyond the Chindwin."
'Dekho' - Journal of the Burma Star Association

This is a young officer's story about training and fighting behind enemy lines in the Burmese jungle beyond the Chindwin, with Orde Wingate, Bernard Fergusson and Mike Calvert, on the first Chindit expedition in 1943.

Every Chindit agreed to be left behind if he was wounded.

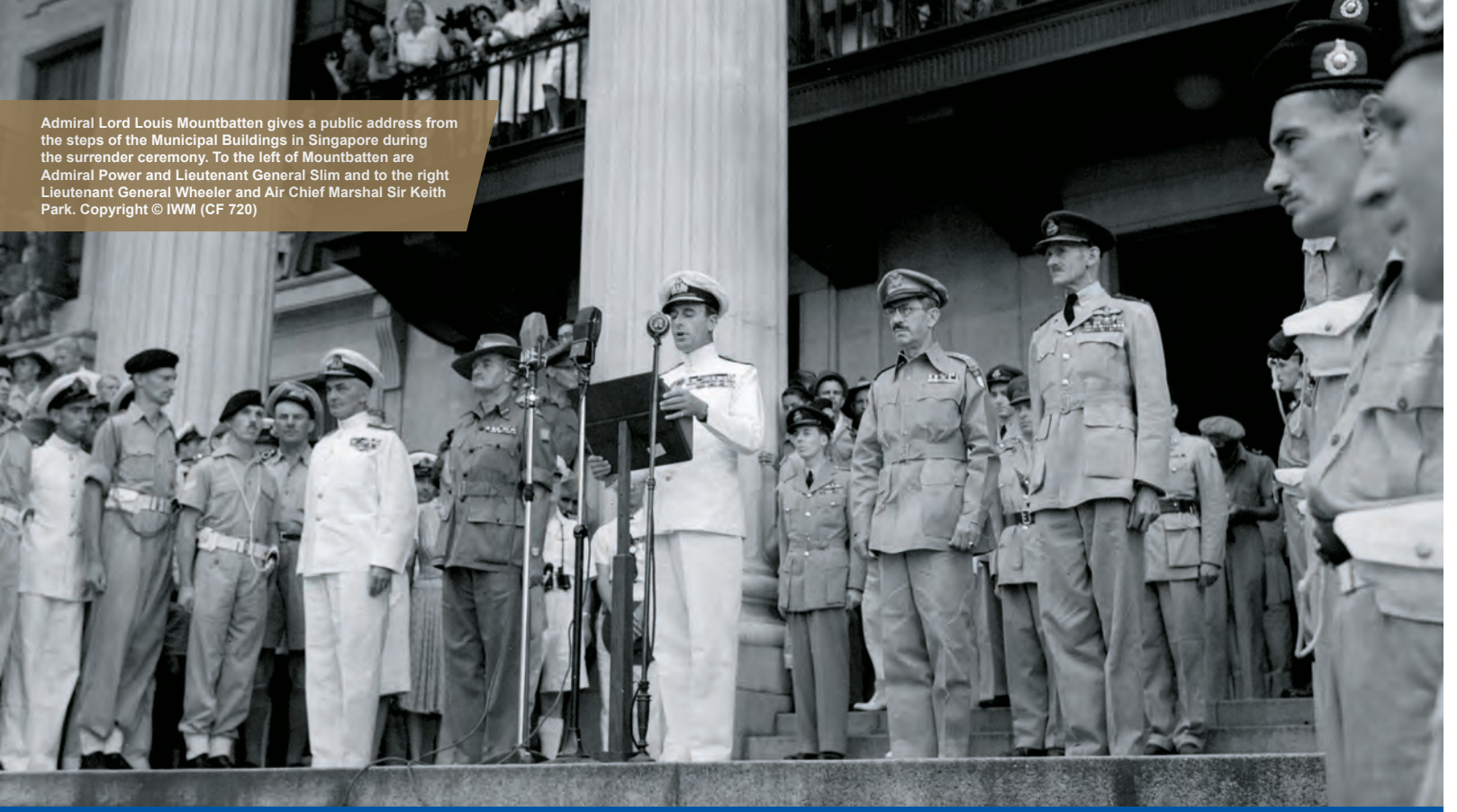
Beaten up and water-tortured, yet only giving his captors false information, Stibbe was moved around Burma till he was jailed in Rangoon.

Reported "Missing Presumed Dead", Stibbe eventually returned in autumn 1945 to the same room at Merton College, Oxford that he had left after Dunkirk.

PEN & SWORD MILITARY

Available from Pen & Sword Books
Return via Rangoon, ISBN: 9781399024921

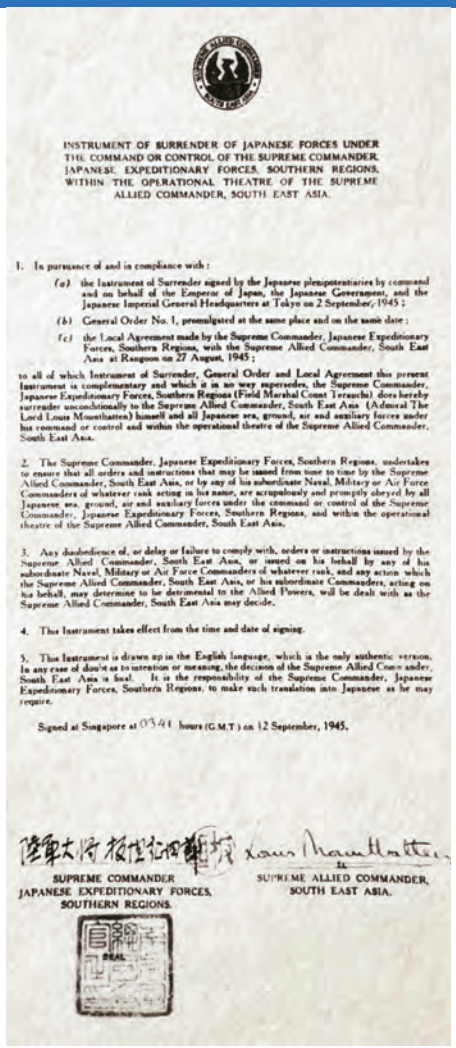
www.pen-and-sword.co.uk



Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten gives a public address from the steps of the Municipal Buildings in Singapore during the surrender ceremony. To the left of Mountbatten are Admiral Power and Lieutenant General Slim and to the right Lieutenant General Wheeler and Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park. Copyright © IWM (CF 720)

OPERATION TIDERACE

Britain retakes Singapore following the Japanese surrender



INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER OF JAPANESE FORCES UNDER THE COMMAND OR CONTROL OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER, JAPANESE EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, SOUTHERN REGIONS, WITHIN THE OPERATIONAL THEATRE OF THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, SOUTH EAST ASIA.

1. In pursuance of and in compliance with :

(a) the Instrument of Surrender signed by the Japanese plenipotentiaries by command and on behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government, and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters at Tokyo on 2 September, 1945 ;

(b) General Order No. 1, promulgated at the same place and on the same date ;

(c) the Local Agreement made by the Supreme Commander, Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions, with the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia at Rangoon on 27 August, 1945 ;

to all of which Instrument of Surrender, General Order and Local Agreement this present Instrument is complementary and which it in no way supersedes, the Supreme Commander, Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions (Field Marshal Count Terauchi) does hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia (Admiral The Lord Louis Mountbatten) himself and all Japanese sea, ground, air and auxiliary forces under his command or control and within the operational theatre of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia.

2. The Supreme Commander, Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions, undertakes to ensure that all orders and instructions that may be issued from time to time by the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, or by any of his subordinate Naval, Military or Air Force Commanders of whatever rank acting in his name, are scrupulously and promptly obeyed by all Japanese sea, ground, air and auxiliary forces under the command or control of the Supreme Commander, Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions, and within the operational theatre of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia.

3. Any disobedience of, or delay or failure to comply with, orders or instructions issued by the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, or issued on his behalf by any of his subordinate Naval, Military or Air Force Commanders of whatever rank, and any action which the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, or his subordinate Commanders, acting on his behalf, may determine to be detrimental to the Allied Powers, will be dealt with as the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia may decide.

4. This Instrument takes effect from the time and date of signing.

5. This Instrument is drawn up in the English language, which is the only authentic version. In any case of doubt as to intention or meaning, the decision of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia is final. It is the responsibility of the Supreme Commander, Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions, to make such translation into Japanese as he may require.

Signed at Singapore at 0341 hours (G.M.T.) on 12 September, 1945.

SUPREME COMMANDER JAPANESE EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, SOUTHERN REGIONS.

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, SOUTH EAST ASIA.

SEAL

On 5 September I945 the Allied Forces reoccupied Singapore and on 12 September, in the Council Chamber of Singapore Town Hall, flanked by his senior officers, Mountbatten accepted the surrender of 680,879 Japanese in South East Asia in the presence of military representatives of the United States, India, Australia, China, France and Holland. Mountbatten was determined that the Japanese should lose face and insisted on senior commanders' swords being handed over in Singapore and in all other appropriate places under his command, whereas MacArthur forbade the taking of swords.

Operation Tiderace (the British plan to retake Singapore) was planned soon after the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9. Emergency planning was put in preparation for the rapid occupation of Singapore at an early date should Japan agree to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration of 26 July.

While *Operation Zipper* (the planned invasion of Malaya) was executed ahead of schedule, it did so on a much smaller scale, having quickly transferred a proportion of its original strength to *Operation Tiderace.*

The convoy consisted of about 90 ships, which included two battleships, *HMS Nelson* and the French battleship *Richelieu*. The heavy cruiser *HMS Sussex* served as the flagship. *HMAS Hawkesbury* was the sole Australian warship during the Japanese surrender, escorting the repatriation transport *Duntroon*. A smaller British naval force was given the task of liberating Penang under *Operation Jurist*, a component of the overall *Operation Zipper.*

There were a total of seven escort carriers: *HMS Ameer, HMS Attacker, HMS Emperor, HMS Empress, HMS Hunter, HMS Khedive* and *HMS Stalker*. The Japanese naval fleet in Singapore consisted of the destroyer *Kamikaze* and two cruisers, *Myōkō* and *Takao*, both of which had been so badly damaged before that they were being used as floating anti-aircraft batteries. Two ex-German U-boats, *I-501* and *I-502* were also in Singapore. Both were moored at Singapore Naval Base. Air strength in both Malaya and Sumatra was estimated to be a little more than 170 aircraft.

Return to Singapore

Operation Tiderace commenced when Mountbatten ordered Allied troops to set sail from Trincomalee and Rangoon on 31 August for Singapore. The fleet was not armed with offensive weapons as Mountbatten had good reason to believe that the Japanese in Malaya and Singapore would surrender without a fight; on 20 August General Itagaki Seishiro, the commander in Singapore, had signalled Mountbatten that he would abide by his emperor's decision and was ready to receive instructions for the Japanese surrender of Singapore.

Japan's defeat had caught the Japanese Command in Singapore by surprise. Many were unwilling to surrender and had vowed to fight to the death. Itagaki had initially balked at the order to surrender and instead ordered the 25th Army (the component of the 7th Area Army defending Singapore) to resist when the Allies arrived. There was even a secret plan to massacre all Allied PoWs on the island.

However, three days after the Emperor's announcement on 15 August, Itagaki flew from Singapore to Saigon to confer with his leader Field Marshal Count Terauchi, Commander of the Japanese Southern Army and all forces in South-east Asia. Terauchi prevailed over Itagaki who then sent his signal to Mountbatten. Newspapers in Singapore were finally allowed to carry the text of the Emperor's speech, confirming what many already knew from listening to All India Radio broadcasts from Delhi on forbidden short-wave radios.

The Allies arrived in Malaya on 28 August, with a small portion of the fleet sent to recapture Penang as part of *Operation Jurist*: the British recapture of Penang. Penang became the first state in Malaya to be liberated by the British from Japanese rule.

On 30 August 1945 a flight of 9 RAAF Catalinas landed in Singapore bearing medical supplies and personnel documents in preparation for the Japanese surrender and the liberation of the thousands of PoWs on the island. When Penang surrendered without resistance under *Operation Jurist*, the Allied fleet sailed for Singapore on 2 September, passing the Raffles Lighthouse at the Southern entrance to the Straits of Malacca.

The fleet arrived in Singapore on 4 September 1945, meeting no opposition. However, the French battleship *Richelieu* struck a magnetic mine at 07:44 on 9 September while passing down the Straits of Malacca. She eventually limped into Singapore at 12:00 on 11 September.

General Itagaki, accompanied by Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome and his aides, were brought aboard *HMS Sussex* in Keppel Harbour to discuss the surrender. They were received by Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Christison and Major-General Robert Mansergh. A tense encounter began when a Japanese officer reportedly remarked, "You are two hours late," only to be met with the reply, "We don't keep Tokyo time here."

By 18:00, the Japanese had surrendered their forces on the island. An estimated 77,000 Japanese troops from Singapore were captured, plus another 26,000 from Malaya.

The formal surrender was finalised on 12 September at Singapore City Hall. Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia Command, came to Singapore to receive the formal surrender of Japanese forces in South East Asia from General Itagaki on behalf of Field Marshal Hisaichi Terauchi, commander of the Japanese Southern Army Group who had suffered a stroke earlier in the year.

A British Military Administration was formed to govern the island until March 1946. Itagaki departed for Japan shortly afterwards to face trial and execution as a war criminal.

Japanese reaction to the surrender

Itagaki had met his generals and senior staff at his HQ at the former Raffles College in Bukit Timah and told his men that they would have to obey the surrender instructions and keep the peace.

That night, more than 300 officers and men killed themselves by falling onto their swords in the Raffles Hotel after a farewell sake party, and later, an entire Japanese platoon killed themselves using grenades.

About 200 Japanese soldiers decided to join the communist guerrillas whom they were fighting just days before in a bid to continue the fight against the British. But they soon returned to their units when they found out that the The Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), which was funded by the Malayan Communist Party, did not plan to fight the returning British.

June 10th
Australians invade Borneo.

June 22nd
US forces capture Okinawa.

August 6th
Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

August 8th
Soviets declare war on Japan.

August 9th
Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

August 14th
Japanese surrender.

AUGUST 15th VJ Day

September 2nd
Japanese surrender Penang.

September 5th
British land in Singapore.

September 7th
Japanese surrender Shanghai.

September 9th
Surrender of remaining Japanese forces in China.

September 13th
Japanese surrender in Burma.

September 16th
Japanese surrender in Hong Kong.

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten accepts the surrender of Japanese forces in South East Asia in the Council Chambers of the Singapore Municipal Building for Great Britain.
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From War to World Unity: The United Nations at 80

In 1945, as the guns of World War II fell silent and the world staggered out of history's bloodiest conflict, the promise of peace glimmered like a fragile dawn. Eighty years later, the United Nations remains humanity's boldest attempt to forge unity from chaos, diplomacy from devastation, and hope from horror.

The road to its creation was paved with unspeakable loss. More than 60 million people perished in the Second World War - soldiers buried on foreign soil, cities levelled by air raids, and innocent civilians lost to genocide and brutality.

The war was not only a crisis of diplomacy, but a shattering indictment of what could happen when the machinery of state collapses into tyranny and unchecked aggression.

It was against this sombre backdrop that leaders of the Allied powers began to envision a new international order - one that could prevent future wars and give voice to nations large and small. The League of Nations, conceived after the First World War, had proven too weak to halt the slide into conflict. What was needed now was something stronger. More inclusive. And built not merely on treaties, but on principles.

San Francisco, 1945: The Birth of a Vision

In April 1945, even as the war in Europe entered its final violent throes, delegates from 50 nations gathered in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. Their mission: to draft the Charter of the United Nations. Among the delegates were figures of profound moral authority - Eleanor Roosevelt among them - alongside diplomats, lawyers, and visionaries determined not to repeat the failures of the past.

The United Nations Charter was signed on **June 26, 1945**, just weeks after the fall of Berlin and mere days before the first atomic bomb would change warfare - and geopolitics - forever. On **October 24, 1945**, the Charter entered into force, officially establishing the United Nations. That day is now celebrated as United Nations Day.

The UN's founding was not simply an act of political will but a moral declaration: that peace was not the natural state of the world, but a choice to be made and remade, generation after generation...

The timing is significant. The UN was born between victory and aftermath - amid both celebration and solemn reckoning. Its founding was not simply an act of political will but a moral declaration: that peace was not the natural state of the world, but a choice to be made and remade, generation after generation.

The Promise and the Paradox

At its heart, the UN was, and remains, a contradiction. It aspires to global equality yet grants special status to the five permanent members of the Security Council. It promises swift action yet is bound by consensus and diplomacy. It speaks often of peace yet operates in a world still shaped by conflict. And yet, despite these tensions, its record speaks to its enduring necessity. Over eight decades, the UN has deployed peacekeepers to over 70 missions, brokered peace agreements, coordinated humanitarian aid in disaster zones, and championed human rights through instruments like the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.**

During the Cold War, the UN was often paralyzed by superpower rivalry, yet it provided an indispensable forum for dialogue when the threat of nuclear annihilation loomed large. In the post-colonial era, it offered newly independent nations a seat at the table and a voice in global affairs. In the 21st century, it has rallied around the **Sustainable Development Goals** - a blueprint for addressing poverty, inequality, and climate change.

Eighty Years On: A Reckoning and Renewal

As the UN celebrates its 80th anniversary, it stands at another crossroads. The challenges it faces today are as complex as those of 1945, though they take different forms: fractured trust between major powers, resurgent authoritarianism, unprecedented displacement, and a climate crisis that transcends borders and ideologies.

Critics often ask whether the UN still matters. It's a fair question. The Security Council has struggled to act decisively in conflicts from Syria to Ukraine. Bureaucratic inertia and political infighting have stalled reforms. And yet, for all its imperfections, the UN endures, because the world has not yet invented a better alternative.

To walk through the halls of the United Nations Headquarters in New York is to witness a paradox in motion: flags of every nation, languages from every continent, and a ceaseless effort to hammer agreement from discord. It is messy, slow, and frequently frustrating. But it is also, arguably, the most noble political experiment of our time.

Eighty years is not a long span in the life of institutions, but it is long enough to reflect and recalibrate. The founders of the UN believed that peace was not simply the absence of war, but the presence of justice. They knew that nations could only prosper when bound together by common rules and shared humanity.
This legacy demands not only preservation but evolution. The UN must grapple with new realities - digital warfare, pandemics, artificial intelligence - while retaining the moral clarity that underpinned its birth. It must continue to amplify marginalized voices, protect civilians from harm, and serve as a counterweight to the forces of division and fear.

A Call to Remember, and Re-imagine

For those of us who live in its long shadow, the UN's 80th anniversary is more than a milestone; it is a summons. A reminder that peace, like history, is not inevitable. That even in moments of profound darkness, humanity can choose cooperation over conquest, dignity over destruction.

As we mark this anniversary, let us remember the voices that rose from the rubble of The Second World War with a vision for something better. Let us honour those who have laboured - quietly and relentlessly -to keep that vision alive. And above all, let us not grow cynical, but remain resolved. The world of 2025 is as imperilled as it is interconnected. The United Nations may not have all the answers. But the belief that brought it into being - that peace requires effort, empathy, and institutions - still lights a way forward.

Britain and the Birth of the United Nations

A Founding Power, A Lasting Influence

1941 – Laying the Foundations the Atlantic Charter, co-authored by Churchill and Roosevelt, sets out ideals of peace, self-determination, and economic cooperation - principles that would anchor the UN Charter.

1942 – United in Name and Purpose Britain is among the 26 signatories to the Declaration by United Nations, pledging joint resistance against the Axis and laying claim to the UN's very name.

1944–1945 – Shaping the Structure British diplomats play a key role at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta, helping design the Security Council and hammering out voting rules that still shape global diplomacy today.

June 1945 – A Pen to History at the San Francisco Conference, Britain joins 49 nations in signing the United Nations Charter. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden signs for the UK, a moment steeped in symbolism and resolve.

A Seat at the Table Britain becomes a permanent member of the UN Security Council, asserting its place in the postwar power structure and committing to global peacekeeping responsibilities.

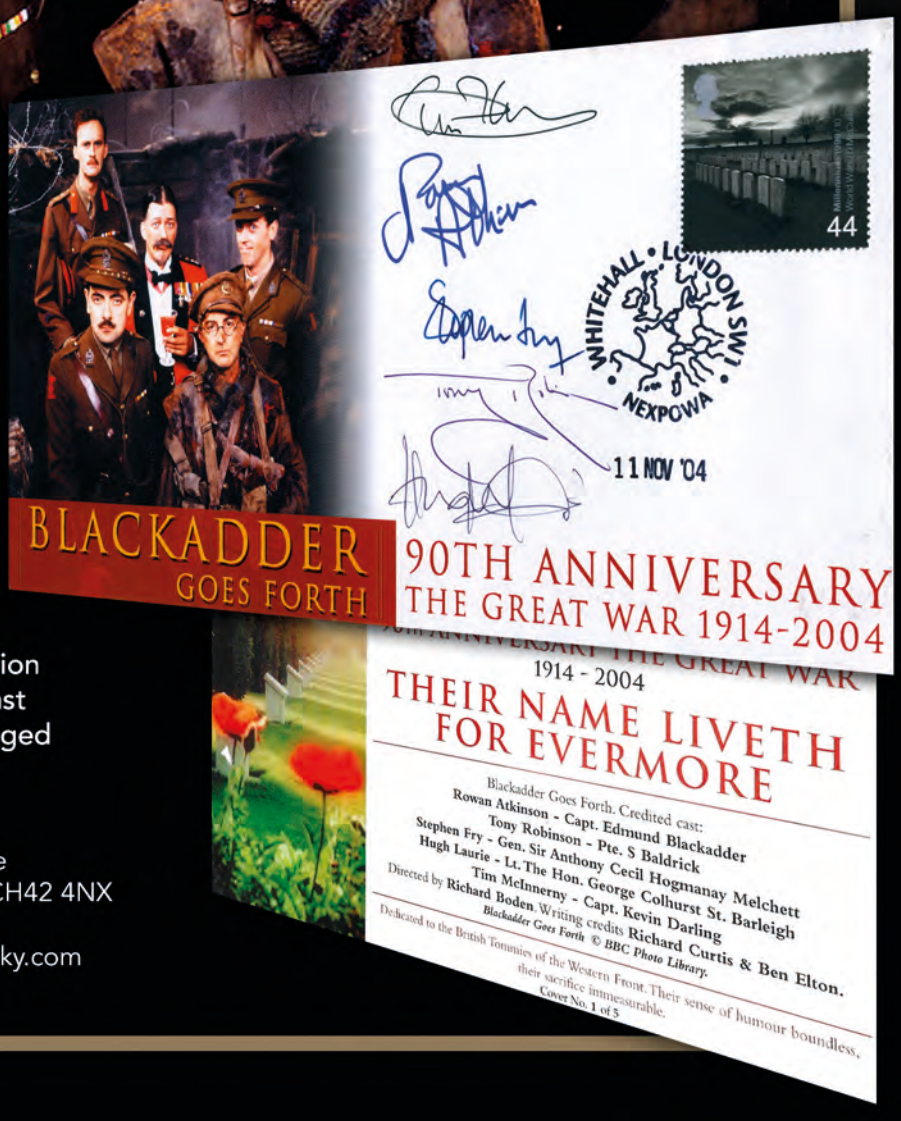
Championing Human Rights British representatives support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and the UK becomes an early advocate for humanitarian values in a changing world.

The United Nations Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO).

The conference, which began on April 25th, aimed to establish a new international organization focused on maintaining world peace. The Charter was signed by representatives of 50 nations, with Poland signing later, making it one of the original 51 member states.

BLACKADDER GOES FORTH

... A Cunning Cover



"We, the cast members of Blackadder take great pride in supporting the 80th Anniversary of VE / VJ Day and thank the Normandy Veterans for their loyal service and sacrifice. Thank you."

Rowan Atkinson CBE
Stephen Fry
Hugh Laurie CBE
Sir Tony Robinson
Tim McInnery

There are five copies of this limited edition commemorative cover, signed by the cast and priced at £100 each. Proceeds pledged to The Spirit of Normandy Trust.

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