



Memories of a momentous day

Sixty years ago, on Tuesday 8 May, 1945, Britain and the Allied powers announced that the war with Germany was over. For some, it was a day of unbridled celebration, for others a day to remember the loved ones they had lost in six years of conflict. Here, THE ARCHER rounds up memories and stories of VE Day from ordinary people in and around East Finchley.

VE Day May 8th 1945

By Hugh Petrie

It was apparent by the beginning of 1945 that the Nazis were no longer in a position to win against the combined allied armies. So when the war finished in Europe on 8 May 1945 it had long been expected.

In April Finchley Council was already considering how to celebrate, and considering what to do about the trenches in Lyttelton Playing Fields, dug by the Home Guard against the threat of invasion. Things seemed almost normal. The Phoenix, then called The Rex, was playing *The Very Thought of You*. Simms' car works football team beat the Royal Signals Team from Mill Hill 4 - 1, and a notice was given of the compulsorily purchase of the 10.5 acre Elmshurst Estate, now Elmshurst Crescent by the Finchley Council for housing.

For some it was a welcome return. J Roake was serving in the Royal Armoured Corp when he was captured at Arras in 1940. He was liberated on 17 April from a POW camp in Upper Silesia, and was back home in Sedgemere Avenue in time for the celebrations.

The 8th itself was a Tuesday and all the sirens and hooters of the local factories and for miles around, sounded to signal the very end of the war. The "offi-

cial" celebrations were held at Avenue House, and in a victory parade from Victoria Park.

In East Finchley various events were put on, mostly for children, including a massive tea at Summerlee Avenue for local children provided by Mesdames Button, Webb, and Everett, and a tea party in Manor Park Road, with 120 children in fancy dress, who were entertained with a barrel organ and presented with home-made toys like tops and whips, and kites.

At the Park Civic Restaurant, East Finchley, 300 children were treated to a slap up meal by the Women's Section of the British Legion. Ninety children sat down to a party at the Baptist Hall in Creighton Avenue provided by the Rev. Charles Bullock. The Fire Guard organised celebrations at All Saints Church Hall for the people of Leicester Road. The hall was decorated with paper chains and flags, 60 or so children wore fancy dress, and five wounded soldiers from Friern Barnet Hospital were given pride of place.

World War II recipes

Dig for Victory

By Diana Cormack

Fear of a food shortage inspired the Dig for Victory campaign, which called on people to grow their own fruit and vegetables in any suitable area - including gardens, parks and, of course, allotments.

Millions of instruction leaflets were distributed, not only about growing plants, but also on the rearing of hens, ducks, rabbits, goats and sheep.

Seeing in the dark

As there were plenty of carrots, they were utilised in many new recipes and the idea that they could improve your eyesight in the blackout caught on.

Baked carrot and onion pie (serves 4)

Ingredients

1lb 8oz carrots, sliced
6 oz turnips, sliced
6 oz onion or leek, sliced
2 oz bacon, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
15 fl. oz of milk and vegetable stock (see method)
4 and a half tablespoons flour
Pinch of pepper
Pinch of ground nutmeg
2 slices bread (cut 1 inch thick from a large loaf) diced
2 tablespoons melted dripping or margarine

Method

Boil the vegetables and bacon in a little salted water until tender. Strain the vegetables and bacon;

The carotene contained in carrots does help night vision so the Government suggested that the RAF's night fighters and bomber aces were achieving better results by eating them. The fact there was a new radar system in use was not revealed at the time!

This WWII recipe makes good use of the humble carrot and is wonderfully tasty.

keep the liquid then measure out the milk to give a total of 15 fl. oz of liquid stock. Place the cooked vegetables in a pie dish.

Blend the flour with a little of the stock, bring the rest of the liquid to the boil and pour onto the blended flour to make a sauce.

Return to the saucepan, stir until it boils and boil gently for five minutes.

Add the seasoning; pour the sauce over the vegetables in the dish. Cover with the bread and spoon the melted dripping or margarine over the top.

Bake in a hot oven for 15-20 minutes until brown and crisp on top.

Read all about it

By Daphne Chamberlain
A group of Barnet Retired and Senior Volunteers have written a book about their wartime experiences - and have become well-known nationally as a result.

Many of them were children at the time and they are telling today's children what life then was really like.

The group, headed by Jean Lamont, go into schools to talk to the children, and show them things like ration books, identity cards or gas masks.

As World War II is on the national curriculum, these visits often coincide with trips to the Imperial War Museum or to the RAF Museum at Hendon.

The project is so successful that it has been featured in *The Times*, and is being copied elsewhere.

Now Barnet's volunteers have collected their memories under one cover in a book called *Our War Stories - Memories of the Second World War*.

They have printed 200 copies, many of which have been distributed to schools, libraries and museums around the borough.

For further information, contact Barnet branch co-ordinator Bill Ibbotson on 020 8440 1291.

VE Day in the saddle

By Peter Crockford

On Saturday 5 May 1945, I was on the way back from a family holiday in Cornwall. I broke the journey in Bristol, visiting a friend, but on Monday caught the train to Teddington, where I worked.

I was urged to stay longer, as VE Day was expected at any time, but I wanted to get back to my work at NPL on wind tunnel propeller tests.

On VE Day, of the 11 people in the house only the landlady and I went to church (Cof E). I would have liked to go to the local Methodist church, but it had been hit by a flying bomb the year before.

My uncle, who also worked in Teddington, suggested that we cycle into London that afternoon. However, after six miles there had been so many street bonfires, which left broken glass, that I felt it was not safe to ride all the way to N2. So we parted company in Wandsworth. He continued on to Muswell Hill, and I returned to Teddington.



Joan Hewitt at the beginning of the War.

When the soldiers kissed my mother

By Joan Hewitt

I was 10 years old in 1945, and living near Holloway. On VE Day I went down to Trafalgar Square with my mum and dad. Everyone was going absolutely mad - jumping into the fountains, climbing on the lions, waving rattles, holding hands and singing.

There were lots of soldiers around, most of them quite merry. Some of them started kissing my mum, and they all ended up on the ground. Everyone was laughing, and she didn't mind, but I did. I was shouting, "Get off my mum!" My dad had disappeared. We always lost him in a crowd anyway, and everywhere was packed that night.

There was a real crush on the Tube, and I was quite frightened when we were getting into Leicester Square station, but it was a great atmosphere.

Everyone was ecstatic after what we'd been through. I remember thinking how lovely it was not to have bombs any more - particularly the V2s (the silent ones). There was a wonderful feeling of freedom.

How East Finchley celebrated VE Day

By Linda Soper

On May 8, 1945 the British, Canadian and Allied forces drove the Nazis out of France and VE Day was a time for true celebration in East Finchley and across the country.

Good neighbours

In those days people were poor but you could leave your front doors open and people wouldn't steal a thing. There was more solidarity between the neighbours.

Even though people were living on rations the women borrowed from neighbours and all shared ingredients to make cakes, trifles and celebration cakes. Trestle tables were laid the length of the street and there was an aroma of freshly baked bread and scones.

As there were no icing bags women crushed granulated sugar with rolling pins and beat it up before putting it into an icing nozzle with darning needles. Teenagers helped lay the tables while younger children played games of tag and hide and seek around them.

Singing and dancing

That afternoon people were listening to music, joking and

chatting. Some were singing, relieved that the blackout curtains could come down and they no longer had to live in fear. A piano was heard playing We'll Meet Again and people joined in tapping their feet. Afterwards there was cheering and shouting. A group of people were dancing, while someone brought an accordion into the street, going round the tables to accompany individuals doing solo songs.

Later that evening people ate baked potatoes and lit bonfires while fireworks went off, cascading into the darkness. The mood was jubilant now that people had a future to think of.

And the prices in those days? A beer was 9d (old pence) - the same as half a dozen eggs. A bricklayer earned £4.00 per week; a GP's annual salary was £10,094. Basic income tax was 8s 6d in the pound, a pair of land girl breeches were 17s 7d, a bottle of whisky sold for 17s 6d and a skirt was 2s.6d