



BENFLEET BULLETIN

U3A
Learn, laugh, live

Commemorative VE Day 75 year anniversary edition

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Benfleet U3A remembers VE Day 8 May 1945

By our reporter **Peter Wiggins**

This photo is my main memory of VE Day 1945, me under the magnifier, in Brooks Avenue, East Ham, where I was born and lived with my mother and grandparents. I was just 3.

I only saw my father until after he was demobbed. He was one of the first to come home as he had been in the Queens 9th Lancers for 16 years having been injured, missing presumed dead for 3 months in Dunkirk. He then went on to fight in Monte Cassino, Italy and then in Montgomery's 8th Army at El Alamein, Egypt.

Prior to VE Day, I have a few memories of living in Brooks Avenue as my grandfather, to me, was my father. He used to take me over to his allotment at the bottom of the slag heaps at Beckton Gas works. He would take me either in his wheel barrow, or in duffel bag with just my head showing, slung over his shoulder. I used to love it there as I could run around with no danger, hiding behind gooseberry bushes, which apparently is where I came from! Much more fun than in our small garden with the ubiquitous outside toilet and our underground Anderson shelter.

Although we were a heavily bombed area, I have no real recollection of having to use the shelter during air raids. We were evacuated as a



family unit to my father's sister in Bolton, Lancashire for a period.

When the photo was taken, as one of the youngest, I was plonked in the front row with other children I didn't know. After the photo the seats were removed, trestle tables setup and food appeared from everywhere for a children's tea party. I was given a clown's hat to wear, held on with elastic under the chin and the girl next to me Rosie Drain, delighted in pulling the elastic as far as it would stretch and then let go! At the time the pain was awful but I would suggest she had the correct surname.

Did I enjoy the day.....I have to say that as I knew nobody, the whole day's memory for me was marred by one person, dear little Rosie!

Peter



VE Day: Sue Lewsey, 11 weeks old, in Shoeburyness with Mum sporting a fashionable Victory Roll hairstyle.



Peter Lewsey's Uncle George



From our reporter
Brian Harrington

We had a great day on the VE anniversary. Most of our Close was out with afternoon tea (and wine) and the old 1940s music was playing. We sat out in the sun for about 4 hours, chatting more to our neighbours than we probably ever have. We're talking about doing it more often! We made our own bunting from paper cut outs.

The VE picture shows me - the first boy from the right on the front row. My cousin and brother are behind me and my Mum and Dad are on the right (Mum's drinking tea!). Hitler is on the far left (all these years we were taught he was on the far right!). When it got dark that evening, the bonfire and Hitler were duly burnt.

Best wishes,

Brian and Pauline H

Yvonne Castle remembers:

...wearing a pink spotted smocked dress with matching coat and a big bow in her hair.

My mother was a court dressmaker so there was a matching hat that I wouldn't wear.

I remember a big party outside where there was air raid shelter, a hole in the ground that she hated going down. The shelter was decorated all over with Union Jacks.

Her house was a ruin with two windows blown out and no ceilings. I remember my mother being the life and soul of the party.

Pat Williams remembers:

My memory of VE Day was a street party in Hendon NW9 with a big bonfire in the middle of the street!

I was seven years old and all I can remember was people dancing everywhere and running in and out of the little houses to use the toilets!!!

A happy time.



CELEBRATIONS

Highfield Avenue



Phil Lloyd-Worth – having a blast



Marion Coleman's wartime spirit bunting made from old carrier bags.



Annette Firth remembers:

There was a big party in Hornsey, North London where I lived,

I remember seeing a banana for the first time – and it tasted disgusting!



Joan Kitchener remembers:

I lived in Hornchurch near the aerodrome. My school was bombed so my elder brother and I were evacuated to North Wales. Mum told me to hold my brother's hand and never let go or she would never be able to find us again.

At Bank Station we were separated into classes and put on different trains. I cried all the way because I had lost my brother. I was placed in a home but a friend and I ran away to try and get home. We were picked up by the police who reunited me with my brother.

By VE day we were back home in Hornchurch. I remember a huge street party with everyone sitting at tables in the middle of the street.

We all took part in races in the park behind their houses and then had a great party!

Jeanette Donovan remembers:

I just remember happiness.

I was taken to Leicester Square, as Trafalgar Square would be too busy.

There were soldiers and sailors everywhere. They were all dancing. Everyone was dancing and there was just this amazing feeling of happiness.



Woodcote Way



Melcombe Road



And Lastly.....

VE Day Commemorative stamps.

Are you in the picture?

