

MEMORIES of the Second World War and STORIES of VE day

- **NONWY MAW** will be 98 years old on VE Day. During the Second World War, she worked as a WREN and served at Bletchley Park as an operator of the bombe decryption device. Nonwy remembers she was in London on VE Day, at her aunt's house, waiting for her brother John to come home. The train he was travelling on was diverted because of the VE Day crowds so he ended up in Bangor, North Wales. Nonwy had to go Bangor to meet him. She remembers being on the train on the way to Bangor and seeing a sea of flags everywhere they stopped.
- **NEKE YSSELMUIDEN** was seven years old and living in Holland when the Germans invaded in 1940. She remembers in 1942 her friend Louis, who lived next door, being taken with his mother and other Jewish residents to a prisoner-of-war camp. The town of Deventer, where she lived, was liberated by the American and Canadian forces on 10th April. She remembers that it was late afternoon and celebrated on their street. Her mother had kept some tea and biscuits to celebrate with. It wasn't until 5th May 1945 that the whole of Holland was liberated. She remembers "everyone partied and danced in the streets. The Americans and Canadians were very popular – they gave chewing gum and sweets to the children and dropped white bread from their planes."
- **JACKIE and RICHARD MEREDITH** have contrasting experiences and memories of the Second World War. Jackie lived in Welwyn Garden City then and they had a "very quiet and easy" war there. Food was always plentiful as her father had an allotment. They had no need of air raid shelters, she says, as the bombers were more interested in targets in London and Coventry. Jackie cannot remember any celebrations for VE day in her street.
Her husband Richard though recalls a street party and celebrations for VE day. He remembers there was an accordion playing, and dancing in the street, and there seemed to be more food than usual! Richard was 10 years old at the time and lived in the East End of London, near the docks. His family home had been demolished during the blitz and he had been evacuated to Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire for about six months during the war.
- **GILL and JOHN ROE** lived in different parts of Hertfordshire during the Second World War. Gill's memories are of what her parents (Fred and Doris Potter, who lived in Marford Road) told her about their experiences of the war and of VE day. They had no children at the outbreak of war so took in evacuees plus two women from the army who were billeted with them. Her father was a lorry driver, which was a reserved occupation so he didn't join the armed forces. Road signs were removed during the war and people were not supposed to keep maps so lorry drivers who knew their way about were invaluable to the war effort. He often had to drive into London, dodging the bombing raids. He kept an allotment and was a member of the ARP (Air Raid Precautions).

John, Gill's husband, was a small boy living in Bishop's Stortford during the war years. His father was a butcher and a member of the Home Guard. John clearly remembers having to sleep in a Morrison air raid shelter on occasions. He also remembers climbing into an army tank that was en route for the D-Day invasion. Being so young, John was not really aware of VE Day but he does remember looking through the school railings down onto the town's market where there was lots of noise and everyone was dancing.

- **DAVID HIGGINS** was a small boy living on the outskirts of Birmingham during the Second World War. He remembers night-time bombing raids, having to sleep in a corrugated shelter in the garden and even surviving the explosion of a bomb dropped nearby which exploded in a large water tank! When the war was over, everyone celebrated and he clearly remembers two massive street parties: one for Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) and the other for Victory in Japan Day (VJ Day) some months later. There was a huge street party on each occasion: tables of food lined the street and there was singing and dancing late into the night. There was also a huge bonfire (it melted the road) and an effigy of 'Hitler on the Gallows' was burned on the bonfire at the VE Day celebration.
- **PATRICK BICKNELL** was an evacuee to Wheathampstead during the Second World War. Patrick was 11 years old when he was evacuated to Wheathampstead in September 1939. He spent two years and three months as an evacuee, staying with several families in the village. Before the outbreak of war, Patrick and his parents had lived in a block of flats in the King's Cross area of London. They visited him and his host family in the village both during and after the war years.
- **PAM LATCHFORD** (née Cunnington) had two brothers who served in the Second World War. Bob, who served in Italy and Egypt for the whole of the war, returned home safely. Alec, who fought in France, was killed just before the end of the war. Pam also had a sister Peg who was in the ATS and billeted near Falmouth, Cornwall, during the war years. Peg was on the anti-aircraft guns. Pam remembers the Battle of Britain, with dogfights overhead and a doodlebug coming down at Bury Farm which blew the glass out of the windows in her house. She recalls hearing bombers heading out in the evenings and the sound of damaged ones struggling back throughout the night. There was also a glider on its way to Arnhem that broke from its tow and crash-landed on Nomansland Common. Pam was in her teens when victory in Europe was announced. All she remembers about VE day was "dancing around the front of Charlie Collins' shop".
- **ANNE ATTON** (née Collins) has found a letter from her father— Charlie Collins — written to his Granny in Ireland in May 1945. He tells her that "on VE day there was dancing in the street (Wheathampstead) until 2am and the church was lit up". He would have been 17 years old at the time. Many of us will remember Charlie Collins in relation to his antiques shop in the High Street and his work, over many years, for the Parish Council and the village.
- **JEANETTE RISLEY** was living in North London during the war. She remembers sandbags piled up in the school hall for some protection, sleeping under the stairs

when there was a night-time air raid, bomb damage in some of the local streets, and the street party on VE Day. She remembers going with her family to Buckingham Palace where everyone was chanting "We want the King!" but they didn't appear on the balcony while her family was there.

Jeanette's husband remembers sleeping in the street shelter that was built in his road as well as the various bomb near-misses that they had, and the pilotless flying bombs, nick-named doodlebugs that got through the various gun barrages. He remembers the general atmosphere of cheerfulness that seemed to be around.