

VE Day

What is VE Day?

VE Day stands for Victory in Europe Day, and is celebrated on 8th May. Although it was not the end of the Second World War, it was the end of the fighting in Europe.

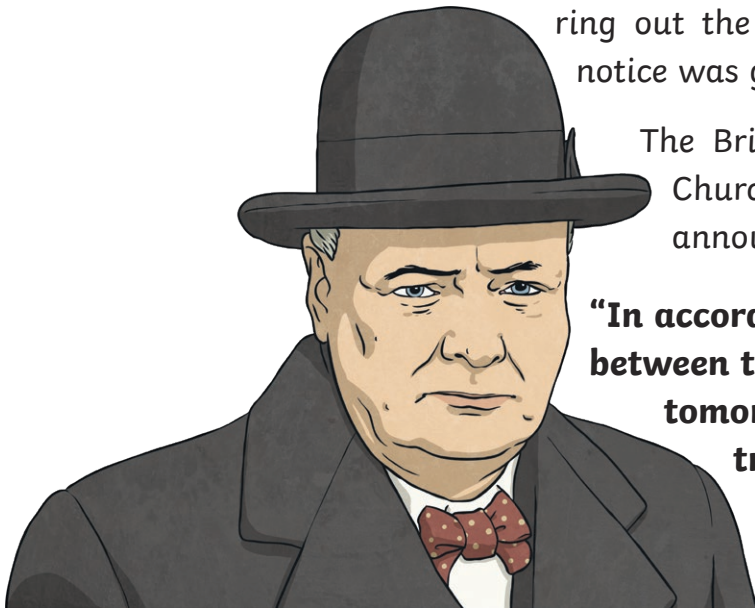


How did it happen?

In April 1945, Hitler died. This meant that the Germans had to surrender their part in WWII to the Allies. The German President of the Third Reich, Grand Admiral Donitz, gave orders that General Jodl should go to the American army Head Quarters in France. Here, Jodl surrendered to the Western and Russian officers, and agreed to all their demands.

The Announcement

The British people began celebrating as soon as they heard the news! Bell ringers in churches around the country were ready to ring out the good news when an official notice was given.



The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, made the following announcement at 19:40, 7th May.

“In accordance with arrangements between three great powers, tomorrow, Tuesday, will be treated as Victory in Europe Day and will be regarded as a holiday.”



The Effects of War

In Britain, during the war in Europe, half a million homes were destroyed, thousands of ordinary people were killed and millions of lives had been torn apart.



The three great powers were:

- The British Empire
- Soviet Union (Russia)
- US

Bring on the Celebrations!

People began decorating the streets with banners, bunting and ribbons. They had street parties, neighbours shared food, and listened to the radio news programmes.

King George VI and the Queen appeared eight times on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, and their two daughters, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth – who is now Her Majesty the Queen – walked in the huge crowds in London!

Churchill told the crowds,
“This is your victory!”

The End of the VE Day

Buckingham Palace was lit up in floodlights for the first time in six years since the war began, and two searchlights formed a V, the sign of victory, above St Paul’s Cathedral in London.

All the lights were turned off again the next day.

A Special Celebration

To celebrate 75 years since the original VE Day, the May Day bank Holiday has been moved for the second time in history. Although it’s usually on a Monday, this year, the May Day Bank holiday will be on Friday 8th May to coincide with the anniversary of VE Day.



Buglers have been invited to play The Last Post and Reveille from their homes at 2:55 p.m. This will be followed by a 'Nation's Toast to the Heroes of World War II' at 3:00 p.m. Here, people at home can raise a drink of their choice and say the following:

"To those who gave so much, we thank you."

The thought is that as a nation, the UK will toast their remembrance, together.

Bugler: Someone that plays the bugle – a horn-like instrument used by soldiers to send signals and orders.



Questions

1. What does VE day stand for?

2. Where were the American Army Headquarters? Tick **one**.

- America
- France
- Germany
- The Soviet Union

3. What happened at 19:40 on 7th May?

4. Read the '**A Special Celebration**' paragraph.

What has happened for the second time in history?

5. When will buglers be playing the Last Post and the Reveille? Tick **one**.

- 3:55 p.m.
- 3:00 p.m.
- 2:55 p.m.
- 7:30 p.m.

6. How do you think the people felt when they heard the news? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Why do you think the King and Queen appeared so many times on the balcony?

8. Why do you think Buckingham Palace had not been lit for 6 years?

Answers

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6. How do you think the people felt when they heard the news? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Pupil's own response, such as: I think the people felt a mixture of things when the news was announced. I think they felt relieved and happy as they cheered and had parties in the street. However, I also think many people will have felt sad because a lot of people died in the war.

7. Why do you think the King and Queen appeared so many times on the balcony?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think the King and Queen appeared so many times on the balcony so they could be there for the people of England. They wanted to share in the good feeling and be part of the celebrations.

8. Why do you think Buckingham Palace had not been lit for 6 years?

Pupil's own response, that may refer to their own knowledge of the blitz, or their own suggestions.