

NOW ON TAPE

AGE TO AGE

Hereford Lore Reminiscence Newsletter

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Hereford Lore, 26 Quarry Road, Hereford HR1 1SS



A bandstand was put up in High Town for VE Day and here a group of local revellers celebrate the end of hostilities in Europe. From left to right they are Joan and Mary Morris, Molly Parker, Edith Davies, Harry Truss, Iris Newman, Mrs Newman and Mrs Birch.

In our last issue (March 1995) we spoke of celebrating the end of the war in Europe on May 8 1945 and also that of the struggle in the Far East with the use of the thermo nuclear device on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

Terrible as these weapons were, they undoubtedly saved the lives of many of our servicemen and women, mine possibly among them.

So it is not so much in celebration, but in remembrance of the friends

who did not return to dance in the streets and to drink what little was available in the pubs of Hereford in the days that followed Victory Europe (VE) and Victory Japan (VJ) that I pen this.

Incidentally if any of our readers would like to share their recollections and pictures with us, why not join us at the Town Hall foyer on Thursdays May 11 May 25 or June 8?

Jim Thomas.



The Dean of Hereford, the Very Rev. Robert Willis, the Mappa Mundi chairman, Sir John Cotterell, Roy Kennett of Hereford Lore, the Mayor, Councillor Kit Gundy and Tom Woolaway, also of Hereford Lore, are photographed after the burial of a time capsule containing copies of Age To Age under the steps of the new Mappa Mundi building in March.

Our next issue of Age to Age will be out in July. Copies are available from City and Belmont Libraries, Hereford Tourist Information Centre, The City Environment Directorate at Garrick House, Age Concern Offices, Berrows House, Bath Street and Hereford Town Hall, Good Old Days' Shop, St Owens Street.

Hereford Lore Editorial Group are Alf Evans, Edith Gammage, Roy Kennett, Jim Thomas, Vi Thomas, Vi Woolaway, Tom Woolaway, Bill Morris and Bill Laws. Thanks to The Rural Media Company and Natalia Silver. We are grateful for the support of :



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Where Were You When Po



One of the many street parties held in Hereford to celebrate the end of the war. This one was held in Moor Street - Mrs Pat Wright, nee Munn, is first on the right, front row.

Party Piece

VE Day happened a few months before I left Lancashire and moved to Hereford, writes **Vi Thomas**. The neighbours in our avenue decided to have a party the day after VE Day. Out came the dried egg and homemade jam to make cakes; paste pots and spam tins were emptied; the local farmer gave us extra eggs; someone produced jellies she had hoarded for years, another some solid icing sugar to decorate the sponges. Several women went and queued for pork pies, we pooled all our cheese rations and another produced several jars of pickled onions. We didn't ask their age!

We put tables down the middle of the avenue, all different sizes, but, covered with cloths and adorned with union jacks and vases of flowers, they looked very festive.

The children had their tea first then played games. Then the evening celebrations started. Old Mrs Hanks suggested the men push her piano from her front room onto the road for a sing song.

My husband and three others started to move it, forgetting her path was on a slope. The piano careered straight through her gates, but she didn't care: "My man will fix that when he gets home. He'll soon be back."

We all sang and danced and then lit a bonfire. What a fire! Sheds had been emptied to fuel the blaze and suddenly it ran out of hand. When the firemen arrived they brought it under control and then tried to stop the party!

Despite our celebrating, we didn't forget the war still raging in the Far East. When Victory Japan (VJ) Day came my husband George and I went to Clydach, Abergavenny to celebrate. He had been back there on compassionate leave from Africa during VE Day to see his parents and told me afterwards that the Dinas was ablaze with bonfires that night, everyone forming great circles, singing and dancing. Once again on VJ day the Dinas was aglow.

His father George had refused to celebrate VE Day as his eldest son, Bill, was a prisoner of war in Japanese hands. It wasn't until some weeks later that we learned Bill had died of beri beri the day after VJ Day.

Forced March

Jack Hill of Tupsley was a prisoner of war in Germany during VE Day. "For two weeks we were force-marched from Leipzig towards the east, a mixed bunch of prisoners of war (POWs). However on May 5, during the night, the silence was broken by the news that the guards had fled and we were in No Man's Land. There were about 40 British POWs and we decided to march towards the American lines about 30kms away. What a welcome we received when we reached them - a meal of cereals and news that the war in Europe was to end later that day."

"The Americans took us to Frankfurt and on to Paris where we were given medical examinations and USA uniforms. Eventually the USA flew us to Haywards Heath where again we were interviewed, received medals and fitted with British Uniforms."



Harry Munn (back row, second on the left) was one of the many Herefordians who joined Rescue groups formed during the war to help with rescue in many bombed cities around the country. Did anyone join one of these groups or remember their work?

Finally we caught a troop train to New Street Station. We Midlanders were a little sad to wish each other farewell for we had been together in various POW camps for the past four years. From Snow Hill station I caught the 3.45 p.m. train to Hereford. May 19 was my memorable day."

Little To Celebrate

Chief Petty Officer Frank Short, of Much Birch, gunnery instructor recalls "When VE Day was being celebrated, I was serving on board the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Victorious with the aircraft carriers Formidable, Illustrious and Indomitable while our aircraft supported USA attacks on Okinawa. We were being attacked by Japanese suicide or kamikaze bombers and some of our crew were killed when a bomber crashed onto our flight deck. Only a few hours before we had all been 'splicing the mainbrace' in celebration of VE Day."

"We did not have much to celebrate until VJ Day and I returned to England safe and sound."

Rum Do

Norman Woodroffe of Luston remembers breaking out the rum ration on VE Day.

"The trouble was we consumed B Company's entire operational reserve of the stuff, every tot of which had to be accounted for."

The following morning I went to the battalion quartermaster in a fragile state to beg him to cover up our profligate dissipation of this priceless War Department owned liquor. The QM, a veteran of the British Army of the Rhine of 1918, didn't turn a hair. I sometimes wonder how he accounted for the rum. "To one Carboy Rum GS, inadvertently let fall from back of lorry?" Bless him.

Napoleon said that wars were won by army quartermasters.

"We were sitting on the banks of the Rhine at the time, not far from the industrial Ruhr now in heaps of rubble. Our Division had been pursuing remnants of the German army and we had remained behind to join in the task of helping the German nation back on its feet."

Peace Broke Out?



Celebrating the return of two of the local lads from the war was this street party on May 8 1945 at Kingsway on the College Estate. Pam Brown (nee Parsons) who loaned us the picture is related to Doris Matthews and Doug Parsons, both regular contributors to Age To Age.

The war in Europe was over. Another year passed before we finally came home. We were the lucky ones."

Late Shift

Margo Morris, then a staff nurse at the County Hospital, remembers that on VE night, the sister on her ward allowed her to go into town for an hour. Accompanied by other nurses and some convalescent soldiers, she made her way to High Town where, even though it was one o'clock in the morning, people were still celebrating.

Her husband Bill went to Cambridge on VJ night like many of his fellow air crew from the nearby airfields. A large number went straight to their favourite pub, the Baron Of Beef which was already packed. Suddenly the landlord shouted: "Listen lads, the drinks are on me. Serve yourselves." He left his position behind the counter and joined the drinkers!

Respectable Games

I was an Aircraft Direction Wren on VE Day at the Royal Air Force Station, Yeovilton" reports **Mrs Prinia Prior** of Sutton St Nicholas, looking back at her diary of fifty years ago.

"Following some suitable congratulatory prayers at Divisions, the Captain announced that all flying was cancelled for the day and it was to be a general holiday. Another Wren and I decided on the spot that Bournemouth had a good deal going for it and we set out in blazing sunshine to hitch hike there, snacking en route off oranges and ice creams.

"The town's fountain was decorated with coloured lights and festive crowds were milling around on the promenades and beaches.

"Much to our gratification, we were quickly picked up by two really glamorous Canadian Air Force officers who took us to dinner at the Queens Club and later to a dance in their mess"

"Afterwards, with hundreds of others, we spent the whole night in games and revelry on the beach. Respectable games, I suspect, for we two Wrens were only nineteen and these were days of innocence. Some people slept on beach chairs for it was a mild and starry night. Everyone was in a state of happiness, some times natural, sometimes induced, marred for us only by the need to return to Yeovilton and to duty at dawn."

Spoiled For Choice

Several residents of Orchard House, Withington recalled their VE Days when two Hereford Lore members, Vi Thomas and Tom Woolaway paid them a visit. **Elsie Mann** remembered a street party in the village of Allensmore; **Elsie Williams** from Westhide recalled a party held on the lawn and in the hall of Porch House while **Catherine Groves** could recollect a party given by Messers Hawkins at Thinghill Court. Daisy Over who was born at Madley also talked to Hereford Lore about her four years with the army followed by 32 years travelling the world with the NAAFI, and, she says, she accepts no responsibility for the famous curled up NAAFI sandwiches.

Daisy never married because, she says, she met so many troops she could not make her



Mrs. Prinia M. Prior, seen wearing her Wrens uniform which still fits, at the recent Shobdon Airfield 50th year celebration of D. Day

SNIPPETS

Wedding Watch

Edith Gammage adds an interesting sequel to our front page picture in the last edition of Age To Age: "The wedding the children were watching was that of my sister, Lily Cole to Bill Godwin of Belmont Road. We lived in the house opposite Lakins Store in Vaga Street and the gateway to our house had a big archway which the neighbours had covered in flowers, something we used to do years ago, and which attracted the children.

"The couple returned from their honeymoon (Carmarthen by motorbike) to find the neighbourhood searching for Gordon Healy who had been playing by the river. Bill rescued his body from the river. Bill was a traveller for Bells Tobacconist of High Town and they kept Sunnymeade Stores on Kings Acre Road".

Air Crashes

We have received a phone call from a reader asking about a plane crash in Eign Road in 1944. We understand that on a Sunday morning, possibly in August 1944, a single engine Proctor aircraft from Madley, crewed by a pilot with an instructor wireless operator and a pupil w/op crashed in or near an orchard close to what was then the Air Training Corps headquarters of No. 124 Hereford City Squadron in Eign Road. The aircraft caught fire and the crew perished. A witness recalls chickens running about with their feathers on fire and soldiers from the Harold Street barracks endeavouring to fight the flames.

Further information would be welcomed from our readers about any other aircraft crashes in or around Hereford, such as the two Proctors, supposed to have crashed on the same day on the outskirts of Madley aerodrome and the Mosquito which crashed in the field adjacent to the Golden Pioneer coach garage on Redhill without the loss of life. The pilot and navigator baled out in the dark.

Also the American Liberator that came down on Christmas day, 1944 on land at the top of the slough on Vowchurch Common with no-one on board - the crew had bailed out over enemy territory - and the US airforce Flying Fortress that flew over St Mary's Hospital at Burghill and removed one of the tall chimneys. Wreckage fell on the hospital, used then as an asylum. Some of the Americans were killed, but some survived.

Anyone For Tennis?

Arthur Bush, always keen on organising various activities, recalls the Table Tennis League around 1938/39, consisting of six local teams with George Masons' and the Y.M.C.A amongst them. Do any of our readers remember playing in the league or the identity of the other teams? Write to Arthur Bush, c/o Hereford Lore, 26 Quarry Road, Tupsley, Hereford.

NOTICEBOARD

The Comedy of Errors

7.30pm £5.75 (conc £4.75)

Tuesday May 16

Shakespeare's brightest and bubbliest comedy, set in Ephesus at the cusp of the Mediterranean where East meets West, is an action-packed tale of mistaken identity, sexual intrigue and knock-about farce. A gloriously colourful Elizabethan romp, with live music, period costume and an immense sense of fun performed by one of the country's most acclaimed new classical theatre companies.

HEREFORD THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

Heavenly Creatures (18) 8pm, £3.00 (conc. £2.00)

Thursday 18 Saturday 20 May

Based on a real-life murder case that scandalised New Zealand in the 1950s 'Heavenly Creatures' has been universally acclaimed as one of the most unusual and gripping films of the 90s. The story of two innocent young girls secret fantasy that turns vivid reality will haunt you for ever

HEREFORD THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

British Legion (Womens) Section Benevolence Ration
Fashion 1939 45, Town Hall, Hereford

Thursday June 1st 1995 - 7.30pm Cheese and Wine Tickets £3.00
Details ring 269259

APU

MUSIC OF THE SACRED VALLEY
8pm £6.50 (concs £5.50)

Friday 12 May

This young, exciting band from the ancient Inca capital Cuzco, in the sacred valley of Peru, have captivated audiences throughout the world now it's Hereford's turn. They bring a spellbinding touch to the sound of the traditional instruments of the Andes, producing an intoxicating mix of ancient and modern music, that is both powerful, captivating, inspiring and joyful.

Hereford Theatre & Arts Centre

Still Celebrating

- Through the years of the second World War leading to VE and VJ Days, many memories come flowing back, especially when one recalls the many names of the world of entertainment, writes Roy Kennett. Vera Lynn, the forces' sweetheart, whose rendering of We'll Meet Again was in itself an anthem of hope to many. Other stars included Gracie Fields with the Biggest Aspidistra In The World; George Formby's Cleaning Windows to Earn An Honest Bob. Then there was Rob Wilton of the Home Guard who, when relating to his wife that he had joined, was asked how he was going to know which was Hitler when the Germans landed. "I've got a tongue in my head, haven't I?" he replied. One of the highpoints of the VE Day celebrations will be an evening of songs from the war "We'll Meet Again" by Hereford Amateur Operatic Society. To support the cost of producing Age To Age, the Society have generously decided to donate box office sales from Wednesday June 21 to our Hereford Lore group. Tickets are available from all members of the editorial group, adults £3.50, OAP/children £3.00. Book early to avoid disappointment. For further details ring 354934 or write to 26 Quarry Road, Tupsley Hereford.

- Hereford City Council's Clarion newspaper has invited readers to lend war time photographs such as this one loaned by Brian Sanders for an exhibition in the Town Hall foyer from May 1 to June 9. Visitors to the exhibition will also have the chance to chat to our editorial group we will be on hand on Thursday May 11 May 25 and June 8 to meet our readers.



Hereford crowds listen to a broadcast of Churchill's speech on May 8 1945, VE Day



- On Saturday May 6 at 7.30pm there will be a Forces' Sweethearts Cabaret, at the Theatre & Arts Centre. A marathon swim in aid of Age Concern will be held over the weekend and on VE Day itself, May 8, there will be all manner of goings on in High Town. Watch out for full details in the local press and radio.

FRIENDS OF AGE TO AGE

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The Good Old Days

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