



VE DAY SPECIAL
RDG ASSOCIATION



These unprecedented times in which we find ourselves have sadly curtailed much Association activity, The Blackpool and Stranocum dinners have been moved into next year as has the Zambelli Golf Trophy. I hope that many of you were able to watch the Online Cavalry Memorial Service enabled through HQ RAC with the support of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. Looking ahead we are hopeful that we will be able to hold a Balaclava Dinner in Northern Ireland this Autumn, equally, in this anniversary year, we hope we will have full attendance at the Remembrance Day Services. A reminder for those that wish to participate in this year's Service at the Cenotaph, you must Register with HHQ by the 1 July 20 to secure tickets for the event.

The Serving Regiment has had its Arms Plot move to Warminster delayed by 6 Months but remain hopeful of being in place ahead of Christmas. On the Training front BATUS this autumn remains an aspiration. With alternative options of Salisbury Plain or Sennelager in Germany being prepared just in case. The Regiment has also been deployed to Covid 19 Testing Centres in Leeds, Gateshead, Bradford, York and Hull.

Looking ahead and with a lifting of restrictions it is hoped that we will be able to hold a Memorial Service here in York to remember those Association Members (7 to date), their friends and families that have died during the Pandemic and equally remember the 10th anniversary of those members of the Regiment killed in Afghanistan in 2010.



This was the cover of the Order of Service for The Second Army Thanksgiving Service - on conclusion of The Campaign in North West Europe – 6 Jun 44 to 5 May 45. It proudly records the formation signs of those participating Brigades of the Second Army.

This weekend as we look forward to the Victory in Europe Commemorations. I thought this would provide a timely opportunity to reflect on the experience of our own Regiments 75 Years ago:

On the 30th of April 1945 - 4/7DG:

The 4/7DG were at Bremervorde the pivot point from where the Regiment turned West towards



Bremerhaven to support the 153rd Infantry Brigade. They still experienced a certain amount of opposition, including Self Propelled Guns, one of which had knocked out a tank from the 22nd Dragoons that were being relieved by the Regiment. As night fell the advance continued with the Infantry taking the lead with the tanks moving through to lead the advance at dawn. The village of Hepstedt was captured along with a fully

operational telephone exchange, through which they negotiated the surrender 'by phone', of the next village Ebsdorf, complete with 50 Prisoners.

The advance was then held up by two Self Propelled Guns, once they had been located, stalked, they were then destroyed by a combination of Tank and our own SP Guns mounted on Valentine Hulls and known as 'Archers', which had been positioned on a flank to the village. The tank fire into the buildings flushed the German SP Guns out, they were subsequently destroyed by the 'Archers' that had been deployed to the flank for just such an eventuality.



For the next two days the Regiment continued to push West, patrolling and maintaining Contact with the enemy without committing itself more than necessary, as the situation was fast becoming ridiculous. Everywhere surrender negotiations were on hand or pending and every day the radio brought tremendous news, Mussolini was dead, Hitler was reported as dead and Admiral Donitz was said to have taken over, the Russians had captured Berlin, and the US 7th Army had got through the Brenner Pass and made contact with the US 5th Army who had fought up through Italy to reach Berchtesgarden.

On the 4th of May the following Signal was issued:

"Top Secret Stop

Germans surrendered unconditionally at 1830 Stop

Hostilities on Second Army fronts will cease at 0800 hours tomorrow 5 May 45 Stop

No Repeat No advance beyond present front line until further orders from this HQ Stop

All Informed"



The 4/7DG ended the ward in the following locations, A Squadron, Mechlestedt. B Squadron, Bremervorde. C Squadron, Lintig and RHQ, Grosserhain, having lost 176 men and 93 tanks.

Two days later, having stripped the additional armour and the necessary modifications of war from their tanks, they led the Victory Parade of the 51st Highland Division in Bremerhaven in front of Lt Gen BG Horrocks CB DSO MC, The Corps Commander.



Gen Montgomery inspecting 4/7DG - 14 Jun 45

5 Innis DG (The Skins):

AT 0500 on the 17th of April the Regiment launched From Walsrode into Soltau, supported by The Royal Scots and flame throwers from 7 RTR making a frontal attack on the town. The Operation was a complete success and with the local fire brigade now fully employed, the town was secured by nightfall. The Regiment went into a Concentration at Wintermoor 15 Miles north of Soltau.

The general strategic situation was developing rapidly with a whiff of victory in the air as the advance quickened against a disintegrating opposition. To the south the 12th US Army Group was nearing the Danube at Regensburg and the Elbe at Leipzig and Magdeburg. To the north the 21st Army Group was driving towards Wulzen and Hamburg and the estuary of the Elbe. The British Armoured Divisions of the Second Army were close to their final objectives, the 11 (VIII Corps) were directed towards Launburg. The 7th (XII Corps) were about to cross the Hamburg Bremen Autobahn for Hamburg and the Guard Armoured (XXX Corps) were directed towards Brenervorde and Stade on the Elbe Estuary. The Regiment now concentrated with 22nd Armoured Brigade advanced towards Welle then Totensen, before swinging west towards the large naval garrison at Buxtehude. The



Hamburg May 45

Regiment then retraced its steps before assembling a force from C Squadron, mounted on Cromwell's an armoured car troop from the 11th Hussars and a Commando Detachment advanced on Buxtehude. The flat open approaches intersected by drainage ditches were a grim prospect particularly if a resolute defence had been conducted. As it was the Garrison, that included an Admiral and 400 'WRENS' surrendered. RHQ and the remaining



Patrolling North of Hamburg

Squadrons moved up to Apensen where they remained while the Divisional Commander negotiated the surrender of Hamburg. In tandem with the surrender negotiations 11 Armoured Division advance up to the Elbe and the Baltic Coast. On the 3rd of May the City Surrendered and the Regiment headed east entering Harburg before crossing into Hamburg on the 4th of May, a sight not to be forgotten by any of those that witnessed it.

was unforgettable, huge areas of the city remained as formless piles of rubble surmounted by twisted girders and blackened rafters, all of which remained inhabited by those that had survived. The Regiment advanced through this urban wasteland to Borstel, where it organised itself to receive Germany's disintegrating army, soldiers and displaced people. It then moved to Beldorf at the west end of the Kiel Canal, where it continued to receive a steady stream of prisoners, including The Chief of Staff of the North Sea Fleet and the German world Heavy Weight Boxer Max Schmeling. At 2000hrs that night came the order that hostilities would cease the next day. The War was over.

The horror of the destruction and devastation



Skins disarming prisoners of war at Borstel

The 'Skins' lost 105 Soldiers during WW2.



Parade at Hamburg Airport - Rehearsal of Guard of Honour for Marshal Zhukov, July, 1945

The skins on parade ready to receive General Zuhkov, sadly he 'had a cold' and cancelled



VE (Victory in Europe) Day

VE Day was one that has always remained in the memory of all those who witnessed it. It meant an end to nearly six years of a war that had cost the lives of millions. A war that had destroyed homes, cities and families, a war that brought huge suffering and privations to the populations of entire countries.

Millions of people rejoiced in the news that Germany had surrendered, relieved that the intense strain of total war was finally over. In town and cities across the world, people marked the victory with dancing and singing at the many street parties.

But it was not the end of the conflict, nor was it an end to the impact the war had on people. The war against Japan did not end until August 1945, and the political, social and economic repercussions of the Second World War were felt long after Germany and Japan surrendered.

In 1945 VE Day was one that remained in the memory of all those who witnessed it.

GERMANY SIGNED AN UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

With Berlin surrounded, Adolf Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945. His named successor was Grand Admiral Karl Donitz. During his brief spell as Germany's president, Donitz negotiated an end to the war with the Allies – whilst seeking to save as many Germans as possible from falling into Soviet hands.

A German delegation arrived at the headquarters of British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery at Luneburg Heath, east of Hamburg, on 4 May. There, Montgomery accepted the unconditional surrender of German forces in the Netherlands, northwest Germany and Denmark on 7 May, at his headquarters in Reims, France, Supreme Allied Commander General Eisenhower accepted the unconditional surrender of all German forces. The document of surrender was signed on behalf of Germany by General Alfred Jodl and came into effect the following day.

Soviet leader Josef Stalin wanted his own ceremony. At Berlin on 8 May, therefore, a further document was signed – this time by German Field Marshal William Keitel. Donitz's plan was partially successful and millions of German soldiers surrendered to Allied forces, thereby escaping Soviet capture.

Germany's surrender was not surprising, it had been anticipated for some time and people across Britain were on standby to start celebrating.

The announcement that the war had ended in Europe was broadcast to the British people over the radio late in the day on 7 May. The BBC interrupted its scheduled programming with a news flash announcing that Victory in Europe Day would be a national holiday, to take place the following day. Newspapers ran the headlines as soon as they could, and special editions were printed to carry the long-awaited announcement. The news that the war was over in Europe soon spread like wildfire across the world.

VE DAY WAS DECLARED A NATIONAL HOLIDAY

A national holiday was declared in Britain for 8 May 1945. In the morning, Churchill had gained assurances from the Ministry of Food that there were enough beer supplies in the capital and the Board of Trade announced that people could purchase red, white and blue bunting without using ration coupons. There were even commemorative items hastily produced in time for the celebrations, including 'VE Day' mugs. Some restaurants had special 'victory' menus, too.



Various events were organised to mark the occasion, including parades, thanksgiving services and street parties. Communities came together to share the moment. London's St Paul's Cathedral held ten consecutive services giving thanks for peace, each one attended by thousands of people. Due to the time difference, VE Day in New Zealand was officially held on 9 May. The country's leadership wanted to delay the national holiday until peace in Europe had been announced by Winston Churchill. New Zealanders therefore had to go to work on 8 May and wait until the following day to celebrate. In the Soviet Union, too, VE Day was on 9 May due to the different time zones.



WINSTON CHURCHILL ADDRESSED THE NATION

Winston Churchill was the man of the hour on VE Day. Britain's Prime Minister had been a major driving force behind the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany and, now that peace had come, the British people were keen to celebrate it with him.



At 3pm on VE Day, Churchill made a national radio broadcast. In it, he announced the welcome news that the war had ended in Europe – but he included a note of caution, saying: 'We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead.' He knew that the war was not over: Japan still had to be defeated. Later on, Churchill appeared on the balcony of the Ministry of Health building in central London and gave an impromptu speech. Huge, cheering crowds gathered below and he declared, 'This is your victory.' The crowd shouted back, 'No – it's yours!' Despite Churchill's crucial wartime role, the British public did not vote him back into power in the

July 1945 General Election. Instead, Clement Attlee's Labour government had control of the country in the immediate post-war years. For Churchill, nothing would match his period as wartime prime minister – he later wrote that everything afterwards was 'all anti-climax'.

VICTORY IN EUROPE WAS MARKED AROUND THE WORLD

The news that the war was over in Europe quickly spread around the world, and people of the British Empire and the Allied countries wanted to celebrate the defeat of Nazi Germany.

In the United States of America, the victory was tempered with the recent death of President Roosevelt, who had led his country through the war years. His successor, Harry S. Truman, dedicated the day to Roosevelt and ordered that flags be kept at half-mast – as part of the 30-day mourning period. Despite this, there were still scenes of great rejoicing in America: in New York, 15,000 police were mobilised to control the huge crowds that had massed in Times Square.

In Australia, the celebrations were also tinged with a sombre mood. The war in the Far East and Pacific was still being fought, and many Australians were serving overseas. But there were scenes of rejoicing in many cities, and services were held in churches around the country to give thanks for the war ending in Europe.

In Paris, huge numbers of people flocked to the centre of the city to celebrate. An eyewitness recalled: 'On the Champs Elysees they were singing 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary,'...in the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile, there was hardly any place to breathe and no place at all to move.'



The charged atmosphere and large crowds could lead to unrest. In Halifax, Canada, riots broke out among the large concentration of military personnel stationed there. Thousands of soldiers, sailors and civilians looted liquor stores – which had been closed for the VE Day holiday – and the resulting riots and vandalism resulted in several deaths.

IT WAS A DAY OF MIXED EMOTIONS



Not everyone celebrated VE Day. For those who had lost loved ones in the conflict, it was a time to reflect. Amidst the street parties and rejoicing, many people mourned the death of a friend or relative, or worried about those who were still serving overseas. For many of the widows the war had produced, the noise and jubilation as people celebrated VE Day was too much to bear and not something they could take part in.

There was also an air of anti-climax. The hardships of the war years had taken their toll on many people and left them with little energy for rejoicing. In Britain, the strain of air raids, the strictures of wartime life and the impact of rationing all left their mark on a weary population who knew there were more difficulties yet to endure.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER VE DAY?

On 8 May 1945 millions of people across the world celebrated Allied victory in Europe. But VE Day did not signal an end to the Second World War. Allied servicemen who had fought their way through Europe prepared for their transfer to the Far East and the Pacific, where fighting would continue for three more months. The possibility of redeployment was a stark reality for many soldiers. British troops jokingly redefined the acronym for the British Liberation Army (BLA) - the designation for the force sent into action in north-west Europe - as 'Burma Looms Ahead'.

VE Day marked the start of the political, economic and physical reconstruction of the continent. In June 1945, 50 countries signed the United Nations Charter and pledged to maintain international peace and security. Millions of refugees and displaced persons, whose lives had been violently uprooted by the war, began the long and difficult process of recovery and repatriation. Leading Nazi officials faced trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

VE DAY 75TH ANNIVERSARY – 8-10 MAY 2020



Strict social distancing measures have led to the cancellation of original plans to mark the 75th anniversary of victory in Europe on May 8, including a veteran's procession and street parties.

The Queen is instead set to lead Britain's commemorations with a televised address to the nation. The message will form part of a series of events on 8 May marking the end of World War Two on the continent. The monarch's pre-recorded address will be broadcast on the BBC at 21:00 - the exact moment her father, King George VI, gave a radio address 75 years ago.

Other plans include a public sing along of Dame Vera Lynn's We'll Meet Again, a song synonymous with World War Two.

It will be the Queen's second televised message during the coronavirus outbreak.

Last month, she echoed the words of the singer known as the Forces' sweetheart when she told those in lockdown "we will meet again" during a rare speech to the nation.



**SO RAISE YOUR GLASS AT 1500HRS ON FRIDAY 8
MAY TO THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR TODAY FOR
OUR TOMORROW**

‘QUIS SEPARABIT’