

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.

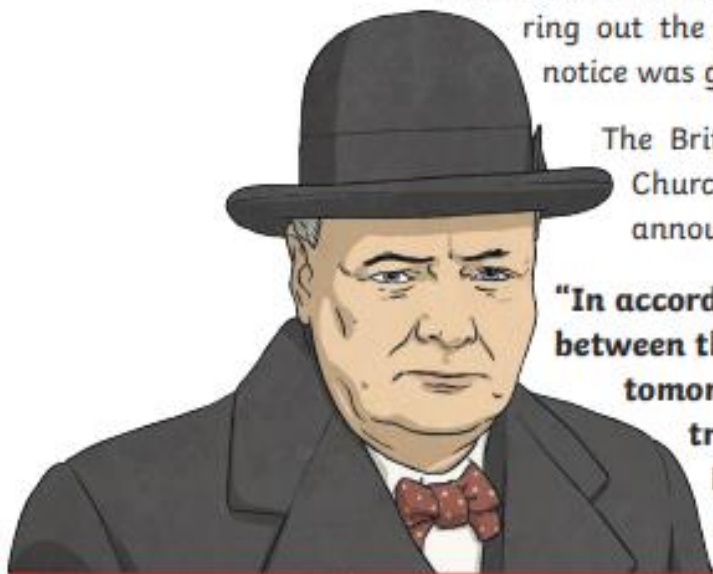


How did it happen?

In April 1945, Hitler died. This meant that the Germans had to surrender their part in the Second World War to the Western armies. The German President of the Third Reich (the German army), 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:

- Great Britain
- Soviet Union (Russia)
- France

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 peace, above St Paul's Cathedral in London.

All the lights were turned off again the next day.



Although everyone was pleased the war in Europe had come to an end, many people would have also felt sad, for the family and friends who had been killed.

Questions

1. What did VE Day mean?

2. What had happened, for VE day to be announced?

3. How would people know that there was good news?

4. Name two effects that war in Europe had had on the British people

5. Who was Winston Churchill?

6. Why did he announce that the next day, Tuesday would be a holiday?

7. Name one of the great powers.

8. Why would some people have felt sad on VE Day?

9. What unusual thing did the princesses do on that day?

10. How was it shown in London that people were happy?
