

THOUGHTS FOR THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY, OBSERVED IN LOCKDOWN

Of course, I have no direct recollection of WW2, of VE Day, but then I'm not 75, it doesn't mean I was totally ignorant of it, even as a child. I was a "Baby boomer" and have faint memories of things being taken off rationing and new foods appearing on the table. I remember clearly the first time I met a banana.

I knew my father had been wounded in the war, in France and he would sometimes have to go to the GP to have another bit of shrapnel, which had worked its way to the surface of his nose or chest, removed. I know that was not unique. I suspect some of the sights he saw were terrible and he rarely, if ever, talked about that side of things. Once they'd patched him up in hospital, he never returned to the frontline, but instead was dispatched to train new recruits, completing his time as an Officer, same rank as Tom Moore, near Folkestone, Kent. He told us about VE day, when Europe was liberated from the evils of Nazi and Fascist ideology and how high spirited young soldiers wanted to mark the occasion by "liberating" a Grand Piano over the cliff edge near the Leas Cliff Pavilion at Folkestone. Of course, it was Dad's job to dissuade them. Though, given his sense of humour, I think there was part of him that would have been curious to know what a grand piano falling 100 feet over a cliff would sound like! He never did find out.

That's how Dad, and probably many of his contemporaries dealt with it, they told us the stories that would amuse us, leaving the door open for us to learn of the real horrors later, as we grew in understanding, and idealistically tried to live our lives to ensure that this sort of thing never happened again. Dad, for example, never mentioned the Holocaust, but worked as a solicitor in Hendon, close to Golders Green, North London. Several of his staff, and many of his clients and friends were Jewish. He knew the terrible reality, and that was what made people like him sign up before they were conscripted.

I talk about my Dad, because he was the link between the events of VE day, and me. Others will have countless different stories, either through experience or via the telling. My Dad lived, but many didn't or survived with far worse injuries than him. Today, let's remember these men and women, in the Armed Forces, the non combatants, those who kept things going, with thanks. Victory in Europe was a liberation from the evil ideologies of Nazism and Fascism, even though today we still have to contend with resurgences of these evils. We must learn from those who did their bit against them 75 years ago. And we must honour those who served.

In this lockdown world the British Legion would be pleased if you can join them, from home of course, in a two minute silence at 1100hrs on Friday the 8th May. Do it sitting quietly at home, your window, on your doorstep, or in your garden, however you wish.

A Prayer for Today by Alan Paton

*Give us courage, O Lord to stand up and be counted,
to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves,
to stand up for ourselves when it is needful for us to do so.
Let us fear nothing more than we fear you.
Let us love nothing more than we love you,
for thus we shall fear nothing also.
Let us have no other God before you,
whether nation or party or state or church.
Let us seek no other peace than the peace which is yours,
and make us instruments,
opening our eyes and our ears and our hearts,
so that we should know always what work of peace we may do for you.*

May God bring you his peace at this turbulent time. Alice (the Vicar)