

## VE Day Celebration

This week would have been the Garden City Association Exhibition week culminating in a VE Day celebration. We had learned last October that the date of the May holiday was to be changed to accommodate the celebrations. A programme was drawn up to tie in with the National programme and plans were in process to have a bugler playing the Last Post at 2:55pm and a piper to play *The Battle's O'er* and a new tune specially written for the 75th Anniversary. There would have been a street style party in the large hall, films, and exhibition in the Church, with music from accordionists to dance to, children's games. bring and share your own food and jelly and ice cream for all. The choir was to lead us in community singing of the war-time songs. We hoped to have had the Lord Lieutenant to read the Street Crier declaration of peace at 6.00pm and the church bells to ring out at 7.00pm followed by a time of quiet reflection. Convid-19 took over and all the plans around the celebrations were up in the air both locally and nationally. As a token, bunting has been put up outside the church by Sandy and Elizabeth. Individually we can mark the occasion by keeping the two minute silence at 11.00am. We are getting used to distancing. Why not later, as you watch the programmes on TV from 2:45pm, let us all sit down around 3:30/4:00pm, indoors or out, with tea, sandwiches, cake, and maybe jelly and ice cream as we might have been having together in the hall – let's celebrate separately, but together.



If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!"

Rudyard Kipling – *If: A Father's Advice to His Son*

One veteran said these words from Kipling kept him going and he often repeated them to his crew as they went into battle.

For people living at the time of VE in 1945 it was the end of lockdown which had lasted six years. Lights were lit, church bells rung and crowds took to the streets to celebrate with singing, dancing and street parties, all done on the spur of the moment to celebrate the well fought freedom, honour those who had fought and those who had given their lives for it.

Stories have been told by those who fought all these years ago now in their 90s and over 100. This celebration would probably have been the last significant occasion to honour them. Young men and women who eagerly went off to fight for the freedom we have enjoyed free from war. Now we are in the process of waging a war not on countries but on a virus and instead of country fighting against country there is a common bond of each country looking for a solution to the virus.

Today we can pay homage to those who fought and died for freedom. Some of the veterans tell stories of how they lied about their age to join the fight, They have told stories of what they had to face, how they kept going in the face of difficulty.

A 103 year old Doctor has told stories of his time in a prisoner of war camp. he asked 'Where were you God when we needed you?' But he also said 'To whom do you turn in your hour of greatest need.' Faith had kept him going when forced to work on the Death Railway on a few grains of rice a day.

A 98 year old is celebrating winning yet another battle, this time from Covid 19 when he was released from hospital yesterday .

*Rosyth played its part when Norway was invaded by Germany on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1940. The Royal family and government fled the country. Many of the Norwegian naval forces ended up in Rosyth and Port Edgar. Sandy has contributed stories about that time.*

*Sigurd Eitland and Phoebe Foster from Parkside Street married on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1941 in the Methodist Church. Sigurd was the first Norwegian to marry a local girl.*

*Gunner Strosøe was married to Betty McPherson from Rosyth in Rosyth Parish Church in 1942 by Rev Arnold Boyd.*

*On V.E. Day two Norwegian Flags were flown from the windows of 27 Queensferry Road, resulting in Norwegian Sailors knocking on the door and being welcomed in to celebrate their forthcoming home trip. By the end of the day a total of thirteen sailors called in.*

*On 11th May, Crown Prince Olaf of Norway embarked on a British warship at Rosyth Dockyard to return to his liberated country. The same evening, German naval surrender delegates were interrogated on board a British battleship lying off Rosyth. For some time the "black-out" had been reduced to a "dim-out," and this restriction was finally abolished on 11th May. – On 5th June, King Haakon of Norway, accompanied by members of the Norwegian Royal Family, left Rosyth on board HMS Norfolk to return to Norway after five years of exile.*

It is God who hold the nations in the hollow of his hand;  
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;  
It is God who builds his City on the Rock and not on sand:  
May the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour;  
Who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;  
In the discipline of freedom we shall know his saving power:  
May the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate  
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;  
When self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great:  
May the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease –  
For the sake of life tomorrow, may our love for it increase;  
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace:  
May the living God be praised!

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Prayer (excerpts from King George VI's broadcast on May 8 1945)

*We give thanks to Almighty God for a great deliverance.*

*May we pause in thanksgiving, then turn our thoughts to the tasks all over the world which peace in Europe brings with it.*

*Let us remember those who will not come back: their constancy and courage in battle, their sacrifice and endurance in the face of a merciless enemy let. Let us remember all men and women in all the services who laid down their lives.*

*Then let us salute in proud gratitude the great host of the living who have brought us to victory . We think of all that upheld us through the six years of suffering the knowledge that freedom, independence existence were all at stake in defending ourselves we were defending the liberties of the whole world. Where freedom is cherished.*

*We kept the faith let us turn to the task of taking up the work again resolved as a people to do nothing unworthy of those who died for us and to make the world a they would have desired for their children and ours.*

Lord at this time we as give our thanks for the past we remember the men and women in the services today who fight for freedom and peace and for those fighting the battle of Convid19, let us commit them all and ourselves into the hands of God who is our strength and shield.

**Amen.**

Romans 13:12:

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then cast out all the works of darkness and put on the armour of light – the Lord Jesus Christ.

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