# VE Day anniversary transforms into celebrations at



Headstone Manor & Museum. Credit: Harrow Museum Collection Harrow Museum Collection

Plans for VE Day 75 this weekend have been significantly affected by coronavirus (COVID-19), but many heritage organisations are finding ways to celebrate.

From Stay at Home parties and online swing dance lessons to radio plays, online exhibitions and talks, projects supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund are ensuring the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day is not forgotten.

## Memories from Devon



Mary Overill, aged 20 in 1942 (left), and aged 98 in 2020. Credit: Bishopsteignton Heritage

One of those who remember VE Day, which marked the end of the Second World War in Europe in 1945, is Mary Overill, 98. She worked in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during the war, including at the Air Ministry in Whitehall. She remembers leaving her office arm-in-arm with her friend.

> "I couldn't believe my eyes, there were people everywhere, cheering, shouting and dancing in the street!"
>
> *Mary Overill, 98*

She says: "I couldn't believe my eyes, there were people everywhere, cheering, shouting and dancing in the street! I felt slightly scared at being in such huge crowds, but we joined the thousands who gathered outside Buckingham Palace to cheer the royal family."

Her story is being told as part of a 10-day countdown to VE Day by Bishopsteignton Heritage in south Devon.

## Stories from Harrow

Mike Pearce, now 82, was living in Harrow, London, in 1945. He was seven when the war ended. He remembers:  "VE Day made us all feel full of joy.

> "The street parties, where we celebrated with neighbours, were great fun with banners and tables laden with all sorts of goodies."
>
> *Mike Pearce, 82*

"The knowledge that the war was over and there would be no more bombing or threat of being conquered by the Nazis was paramount…

"The street parties, where we celebrated with neighbours, were great fun with banners and tables laden with all sorts of goodies that were usually only served on birthdays. Life was suddenly full of light and happiness."

> VE Day street party
>
> A 1945 street party. Credit: Michael Pearce

A sadder wartime story from Harrow is that of Betty, 90, who vividly remembers the morning a bomb fell on her house. It was the longest day of the year, 21 June 1944.

Having just got back from staying in a shelter all evening, Betty, then 14, hid behind the kitchen door as her parents and her sister were killed by a bomb.

Because of this tragic experience, Betty recalls not celebrating as hard as many others did on VE Day. She joined in with the celebrations with friends from work as they headed into London, but for Betty, it was a moment of reflection – the first time in a long time she felt like she could relax.

## Find more stories

Both Betty and Mike's stories will feature in an exhibition at Headstone Manor & Museum, Harrow. It is currently planned to open on Tuesday 21 July.

Meanwhile the Museum is offering VE Day activities on their website as well as exhibition previews on Pinterest.

## More for VE Day

- A round-up of key events can be found on the VE Day 75 website.
- Discover more ideas on how to take part in heritage from home.



An #IsolationCreation project

## How to enjoy heritage from home