BIG NEWS



The Red Arrows flew over London on Friday 8 May

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VE DAY

CELEBRATING IN LOCKDOWN



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FRIDAY 8 May marked 75 years since VE Day, the end of World War Two in Europe.

Plans for street parties, parades and concerts had to be put on hold because of the coronavirus, but it was still possible to celebrate in lockdown.

What is VE Day?

VE Day – Victory in Europe Day – 8 May 1945 was the day the Allied forces announced the surrender of Germany, which ended the Second World War in Europe. The big four Allied powers were Britain, the USA, France and the Soviet Union (Russia).

Celebrations began straight away throughout Britain, with more than one million people partying in the streets. King George VI appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Princess Elizabeth (now the UK's Queen), her mum Queen Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret joined them.

VE Day is recognised every year with street parties and community gatherings, and commemorates the millions of civilians and millions in the armed forces who lost their lives in battle.

In 2015, you might remember the 70th anniversary of VE Day was marked with three days of celebrations. The Queen joined 1,000 veterans and their families in a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey.

Lockdown means things had to be different this time. The Queen delivered a special television message from Windsor Castle at 9pm – at the moment that her father, King George VI, gave a radio address back in 1945.

Although social distancing means gatherings and parties were cancelled, there were still other ways to mark the day during lockdown.

A two-minute silence took place at 11am. Then, at 3pm, there was The Nation's Toast to the Heroes of WW2, with people across the UK standing up and raising a glass of their favourite drink while saying the following toast: "To those who gave so much, we thank you." The Red Arrows and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight performed a flypast over Buckingham Palace in London.

Many people decorated their homes in red, white and blue, and held 'stay-at-home street parties'. Neighbours hung bunting over their homes, had picnics in their back or front gardens, while remembering social distancing and keeping at least 2m apart from others.



Jubilant public, 1945

VE DAY STAMP SURPRISE

A 90-year-old woman was shocked to see herself on a stamp celebrating 75 years since the end of World War Two! The stamps all feature old photos from 1945 – the year the war ended in Europe. Bette Williamson can be seen on the VE Day stamp, on the right, behind the US flag. She was just 14 at the time. Describing the historic day, Bette told the BBC: "The atmosphere was electric, you kissed and hugged everyone, it was wonderful. We're in a similar war spirit now, everyone coming together to help one another. It's lovely to see."