Lynsted with Kingsdown Society

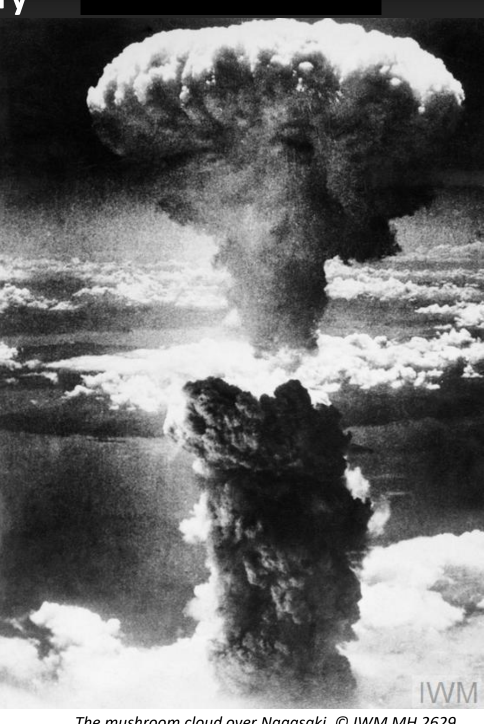
VJ DAY 75 Anniversary

Member of IWM WAR AND CONFLICT Subject Specialist Network V75

A chilling end to war in the Far East

"The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended World War II. There can be no doubt of that. While they brought death and destruction on a horrifying scale, they averted even greater losses – American, English, and Japanese".

Lieutenant General Leslie R Groves, former director of the `Manhattan Project' that had developed the first A-bomb



The mushroom cloud over Nagasaki. © IWM MH 2629

This view generated controversy as to the justification or otherwise of the use of such weapons on largely defenceless civilian targets, at such terrible cost. But the nuclear genie, once out of the bottle, could not be put back in. The ever-present threat of a nuclear option in the superpower stand-offs of the Cold War defined global politics after 1945. Hiroshima and Nagasaki raised the spectre of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) that has haunted the world into our present times.

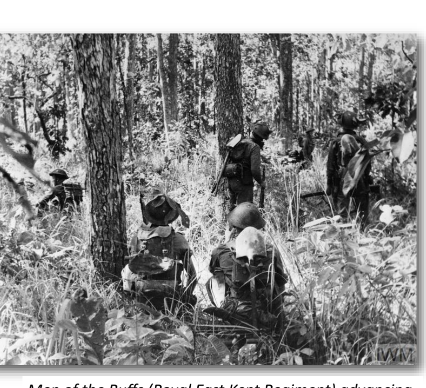
The surrender of Imperial Japan was announced by Japanese Emperor Hirohito on August 15 and formally signed on 2 September 1945. The hostilities of World War II were at last at an end.

The "forgotten war"

After VE Day, some had almost forgotten that the war had continued in the Far East. For some, anxiety and loss continued.

The 2nd Battalion of our local regiment, the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), had been in active service in Burma and Malaya since 1944. Serving with the British Fourteenth Army, a multi-national force comprising units from Commonwealth countries. It was often referred to as the "Forgotten Army". Operations in the Burma Campaign were generally unreported by the press. Lieutenant-General William Slim, the commander of the 14th, is reported to have told his troops:

"When you go home don't worry about what to tell your loved ones and friends about service in Asia. No one will know where you were, or where it is if you do. You are, and will remain "The Forgotten Army."



Men of the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) advancing on Myitson village through the jungle after crossing the Shweli river. © IWM (SE 1790)

The men we will not forget

Not forgotten are our local men who gave their lives in the Far East:

Private **Leslie Frank Boorman of Teynham**, 2nd Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment). Killed in action between 1 and 2 February 1945, aged 21 around the Shweli river to Myitson, Burma.

Leslie is buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar.

Edward George Post of Teynham, an Inspector in the Hong Kong Police Force, presumed killed on or about 18 December 1941 during the Japanese capture of Hong Kong, aged 43.

Edwin was last seen leading a hand-full of men with bayonets fixed. This was the second war casualty for the family. Edwin's sister had died from TNT poisoning from her munitions work in WW1.

Edwin is commemorated on the Sai Won Memorial, Hong Kong.

Sergeant **Kenneth Whigham Stevens of Newnham**, Royal Artillery, previously Staff Sergeant, Indian Army Corps of Clerks. Killed in action while a prisoner of war on 21 September 1944, aged 24.

Kenneth was captured on 15 February 1942 when Singapore fell to the Imperial Japanese Army.

Kenneth suffered 2 year 7 months as a prisoner of the Japanese, firstly working on the infamous Burma Railway. Surviving this he died when the ship moving him and hundreds of other prisoners to a new camp, was sunk by a US torpedo. The prisoners had been locked in the hold of the ship and the Japanese had refused to identify the ship as carrying prisoners as required by international law.

Kenneth's remains lay in the Bay of Bataan.

Photograph courtesy of Kenneth's nephew, Christopher Goodever-Ballard

Countdown to the end

There has been much discussion in the years since the conclusion of war about the rights and wrongs of how the end came about. The Potsdam Conference had defined the terms for a Japanese Surrender that would require it to be accepted by all Japanese armed forces.

On **26 July 1945**, United States President Harry S Truman, United Kingdom Prime Minister Elect, Clement Attlee, and Chairman of China Chiang Kai-shek signed the "Potsdam Agreement". The ultimatum stated that, if Japan did not surrender, it would face *"prompt and utter destruction"*. On **28 July 1945** the Allies delivered this to Japan.

黙殺 - Peace offer ignored

The response: **"黙殺 Mokusatsu"**. Translated to mean *"ignore"*, *"take no notice of"* or *"treat with silent contempt"*. It has been argued that this may not have been translated accurately, a problem encountered before in traditional Japanese formal written diplomatic communication. Indeed, after WW2 the Japanese did modernise their language. Nevertheless the Japanese had publicly stated their intent to fight on to the bitter end.

In the background, Japan's leaders were asking the Soviet Union (who were neutral) to mediate on their behalf for more favourable surrender terms. The Soviets played along. However, they were secretly planning an attack on Japanese forces in Manchuria, Korea, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. This had been agreed in secrect with the United Kingdom and United States at the Yalta Conferences.

The promised *"prompt and utter destruction"* arrives

Hiroshima

At **8.15am on 6 August 1945**, the US detonated an atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Tokyo had already been devastated by fire bombs.
President Truman called again for Japan's surrender, warning them to "expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."

On 8 August 1945, as promised, but in violation of the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchukuo.

The Japanese government did not believe the US had a second bomb.

A view of the devastation caused by the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan, 6 August 1945. © IWM MH 29437

Nagasaki

Just three days later, on **9 August 1945**, the US dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Emperor Hirohito ordered his "Supreme Council for the Direction of the War" to accept the terms the Allies had set down in the Potsdam Declaration for ending the war.

A general view of Nagasaki looking towards the hypocentre, a mile behind the Mitsubish Armament and Steel Works, seen across the Urakami River in the centre background. In the foreground is the shell of the Mitsubishi Woodworking Plant, which was unharmed by the blast, but was gutted by fire. © IWM MH 29411

The news breaks at home

Japan had submitted an offer of surrender on **10 August 1945**. It would take several days for the exact terms of the surrender to be agreed. However, when this news broke, people took to the streets to celebrate.

Crowds dance in Oxford Circus, London, on 10 August 1945. © IWM EA 75898

The Kyūjō incident

Not all agreed to the surrender. As the fine print was discussed, on the **night of the 14-15 August**, the Staff Office of Japan's Ministry of War and the Imperial Guard, attempted a military coup d'état.

Lieutenant General Takeshi Mori of the First Imperial Guards Division was murdered, an attempt was made to put Emperor Hirohito under house arrest and a counterfeit order revoking the surrender was prepared.
However, the Eastern District Army and the high command of the Imperial Japanese Army refused to take part. With this failure, those who led this attempt committed suicide.

As a result, the communiqué of the intent for a Japanese surrender continued as planned.

The surrender

On August 15, 1945, at precisely 12:00pm, the Japanese national anthem "Kimigayo" [His Imperial Majesty's Reign] was played, followed by a pre-recorded speech by Emperor Hirohito. This was the first time the Japanese people had heard the voice of their Emperor. The broadcast was translated into English and broadcast simultaneously across the world by radio presenter Tadaichi Hirakawa.

There was some confusion as the word "surrender" was not mentioned in the speech. It was left to the radio announcer to clarify that the Emperor's message did mean that Japan was surrendering.

It was reported that Japanese retreated into their homes or places of business for several hours to quietly absorb and contemplate the significance of the announcement.

Emperor Hirohita recording the "surrender" speech on 14 August 1945

The full text of the speech:

TO OUR GOOD AND LOYAL SUBJECTS,

After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in our empire today, we have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

We have ordered our government to communicate to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union that our empire accepts the provisions of their joint declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well-being of our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by our imperial ancestors and which lies close to our heart.

Indeed, we declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone – the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the state, and the devoted service of our one hundred million people – the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.

Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects, or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our imperial ancestors? This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the joint declaration of the powers.

We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to our allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire towards the emancipation of East Asia.

The thought of those officers and men as well as others who have fallen in the fields of battle, those who died at their posts of duty, or those who met with untimely death and all their bereaved families, pains our heart night and day.

The welfare of the wounded and the war-sufferers, and of those who have lost their homes and livelihood, are the objects of our profound solicitude.

The hardships and sufferings to which our nation is to be subjected hereafter will be certainly great. We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all of you, our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is unsufferable.

Having been able to safeguard and maintain the Kokutai [system of government], We are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.

Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion which may engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife which may create confusion, lead you astray and cause you to lose the confidence of the world.

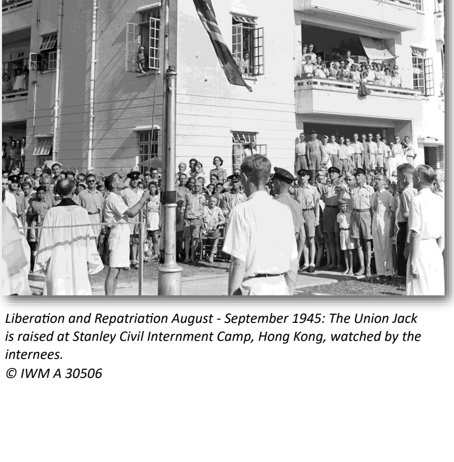
Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith in the imperishability of its sacred land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibility, and of the long road before it.

Unite your total strength, to be devoted to construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude, foster nobility of spirit, and work with resolution – so that you may enhance the innate glory of the imperial state and keep pace with the progress of the world.

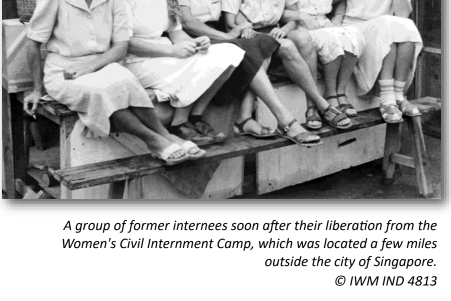
On **28 August 1945**, the occupation of Japan led by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers began.

The surrender ceremony was held on **2 September 1945**, aboard the USS Missouri, at which officials from the Japanese government signed the Japanese Instrument of Surrender, thereby ending the hostilities.

Japanese military leaders on board USS Missouri during the surrender ceremony on 2 September 1945



Liberation and Repatriation August - September 1945: The Union Jack is raised at Stanley Civil Internment Camp, Hong Kong, watched by the internees.
© IWM A 30506



A group of former internees soon after their liberation from the Women's Civil Internment Camp, which was located a few miles outside the city of Singapore.
© IWM IND 4813

A group of men from Manchester who were prisoners of the Japanese at Changi Prison, Singapore.
© IWM CF 710

Victory in Japan Day - 15 August 1945

Rejoicing in the UK and Wales

At midnight on **14 August 1945**, the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee confirmed the news in a broadcast saying, "the last of our enemies is laid low." He expressed gratitude to Britain's allies, in Australia and New Zealand, India, Burma, all countries occupied by and loyal to the USSR. But special thanks went to the United States "without whose prodigious efforts the war in the East would still have many years to run".

On **15 August 1945** US President Harry S Truman declared the day as Victory over Japan Day, at a White House press conference.

Civilians walk amongst the piles of torn up paper which have been thrown, 'ticker tape' style, from the windows of offices, on Lower Regent Street, London, to celebrate the signing of the Peace with Japan, 15 August 1945.

In the middle of the road (left of the photograph), a brick, surface air-raid shelter can be seen.

© IWM (D 25638)

On the evening of the 15 August 1945, King George VI addressed the nation and the Empire in a broadcast from his study at Buckingham Palace:

Three months have passed since I asked you to join with me in an act of thanksgiving for the defeat of Germany.

We then rejoiced that peace had returned to Europe, but we knew that a strong and relentless enemy still remained to be conquered in Asia. None could then tell how long or how heavy would prove the struggle that still awaited us.

Japan has surrendered, so let us join in thanking Almighty God that war has ended throughout the world, and that in every country men may now turn their industry, skill, and science to repairing its frightful devastation and to building prosperity and happiness.

Our sense of deliverance is overpowering, and with it all, we have a right to feel that we have done our duty.

I ask you again at this solemn hour to remember all who have laid down their lives, and all who have endured the loss of those love them. Remember, too, the sufferings of those who fell into the hands of the enemy, whether as prisoners of war or because their homes had been overrun. They have been in our thoughts all through these dark years, and let us pray that one result of the defeat of Japan may be many happy reunions of those who have been long separated from each other.

The campaigns in the Far East will be famous in history for many reasons. There is one feature of them which is a special source of pride to me, and also to you, the citizens of our British Commonwealth and Empire to whom I speak. In those campaigns there have fought, side by side with our allies, representatives of almost every unit in our great community - men from the Old Country, men from the Dominions, from India, and the Colonies. They fought in brotherhood; through their courage and endurance they conquered. To all of them and to the women who shared with them the hardships and dangers of war I send my proud and grateful thanks.

The war is over. You know, I think, that those four words have for The Queen and myself the same significance, simple yet immense, that they have for you. Our hearts are full to overflowing, as are your own. Yet there is not one of us who has experienced this terrible war who does not realize that we shall feel its inevitable consequences long after we have all forgotten our rejoicings of today.

But that relief from past dangers must not blind us to the demands of the future. The British people here at home have added lustre to the true fame of our Nation, and we stand today with our whole Empire in the forefront of the victorious United Nations. Great, therefore, is our responsibility to make sure by the actions of every man and every woman here and throughout the Empire and Commonwealth that the peace gained amid measureless trials and suffering shall not be cast away.

In many anxious times in our long history the unconquerable spirit of our peoples has served us well, bringing us to safety out of great peril. Yet I doubt if anything in all that has gone before has matched the enduring courage and the quiet determination which you have shown during these last six years. It is of this unconquerable spirit that I would speak to you tonight. For great as are the deeds that you have done, there must be no falling off from this high endeavour. We have spent freely of all that we had: now we shall have to work hard to restore what has been lost, and to establish peace on the unshakeable foundations, not alone of material strength, but also of moral authority. Then, indeed, the curse of war may be lifted from the world, and States and peoples, great and small, may dwell together though long periods of tranquillity in brighter and better days than we ourselves have known.

The world has come to look for certain things, for certain qualities from the peoples of the Commonwealth and Empire. We have our part to play in restoring the shattered fabric of civilisation. It is a proud and difficult part, and if you carry on in the years to come as you have done so splendidly in the war, you and your children can look forward to the future, not with fear, but with high hopes of a surer happiness for all. It is to this great task that I call you now, and I know that I shall not call in vain.

In the meantime, from the bottom of my heart I thank my Peoples for all they have done, not only for themselves but for mankind.

Local celebrations "subdued"

In the 3 months since VE Day, Britain had been relieved of the fear of bombings, undergone a general election and was trying to resume some semblance of normality. It is reported that some local celebrations were "subdued".

As the announcement of the end of the war was made at midnight, many people were in their beds and awoken by the sound of church bells and of the ships sirens being sounded along the Medway and Thames. Some people in quieter areas have nothing about the Japanese surrender until the broadcast a recording of the Prime Minister's speech which was played again at 7am the next morning.

A public holiday was declared but the late announcement led confusion so shops did not know whether to open and public transport was haphazard. In general, people just felt the need to mingle in the street.

The book "The War Years 1939-1945 in Faversham and District" describes the events:

Local folk who stayed up to hear the midnight news broadcast on Tuesday, 14th August, were able to retire happy in the knowledge that the long struggle was over – Japan, the last survivor of the Axis powers, had surrendered. At ten o'clock the following morning church bells rang jubilantly the message of peace and flags speedily appeared again.

As in the past victory, VJ Day and the following day were proclaimed bank holidays. Victory Day morning, however, was dull with drizzling rain – not at all in keeping with the spirit of the day - but in the afternoon the sun broke through and in the evening the town assumed a more animated appearance, a huge number of people were paraded in the street, giving a carnival aspect. The tower of the Parish Church was floodlighted and there were many other electrical illuminations. Thanksgiving services were again held in the evening.

Speaking during the morning of the Town Hall, the Mayor said- "We all thank God that the long-dragged out war is now at an end. We remember with deep gratitude the services rendered by the Fighting Forces and the supreme sacrifice made by those gallant men who will never return to enjoy the days of peace. The people of Faversham have much to be thankful. The enemy has been very near them, but by the mercy of God the town has been spared the horrors which some others have experienced."

The world takes stock:

World War 2 was the deadliest global war in history. Even now there is no exact figure for the casualties. Millions of civilians and military personnel from 30 nations were killed. Many more civilians died than members of the military, either as a direct result of the war, or from disease and famine caused by the war. The US Census Bureau estimated that around 3% of the world's population was lost.

In the United Kingdom, 384,000 soldiers were killed in combat and close to 70,000 civilians died (as opposed to 2,000 in WW1). In the seven-month period between September 1940 and May 1941, the Blitz alone took 40,000 civilian lives.

Data shows that the Soviet Union had the highest number of WW2 casualties with 11.4 million military deaths, up to 10 million civilian deaths due to military activity, and an additional 8 million to 9 million deaths due to famine and disease. More than 1.4 million members of the Soviet Union's military were wounded as a result of the war.

In China there were 3.75 million military deaths and as many as 18 million civilian deaths.

While these two nations saw the highest number of casualties, other countries also lost millions of civilians and military members. This list shows the total estimated deaths of all civilians and members of the military.

Country	Military Deaths	Civilian Deaths	Total
USSR	10,700,000	13,300,000	24,000,000
Germany	5,533,000	3,267,000	8,800,000
China	4,000,000	16,000,000	20,000,000
Japan	2,120,000	980,000	3,100,000
United States	416,800	1,700	418,500
United Kingdom	383,600	67,100	450,700
Italy	301,400	155,600	457,000
Hungary	300,000	280,000	580,000
Romania	300,000	533,000	833,000
Austria	261,000	123,700	384,700
Poland	240,000	5,360,000	5,600,000
France	217,600	350,000	567,600
Finland	95,000	2,000	97,000
Jews	87,000	2,413,000	2,500,000
Philippines	57,000	943,000	1,000,000
Albania	30,000	0	45,400
Australia	39,800	700	40,500
Greece	35,000	765,000	800,000
Albania	30,000	200	30,200
Bulgaria	22,000	3,000	25,000
Netherlands	17,000	284,000	301,000
Belgium	12,100	74,000	86,100
New Zealand	11,900	0	11,900
South Africa	11,900	0	11,900
Ethiopia	5,000	95,000	100,000
Norway	3,000	6,500	9,500
Denmark	2,100	1,100	3,200
Brazil	1,000	1,000	2,000
Estonia		51,000	51,000
Latvia		227,000	227,000
Lithuania		353,000	353,000
Luxembourg		2,000	2,000
Malaysia		100,000	100,000
Papua New Guinea		15,000	15,000
Singapore		50,000	50,000
	25,248,600	45,804,600	71,053,200

Is it over yet?

End of the war with Japan:

The state of war in Japan formally ended when the Treaty of San Francisco came into force on **28 April 1952**.

Four more years passed before Japan and the Soviet Union signed the Soviet–Japanese Joint Declaration of **1956**, which formally brought an end to their state of war.

However, some of us will remember that some Japanese soldiers serving in isolated pockets throughout Asia and the Pacific, refused to surrender. Some did not get the message that Japan had surrendered and continued to fight or hide out. The final Japanese soldier surrendered in 1974:

Hiroo Onoda (R) offering his military sword to Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos (L) on the day of his surrender, March 11, 1974.

Second Lieutenant Hiro Onoda served as an intelligence officer in the Imperial Japanese Army. He did not surrender and spent a further 29 years hiding in the Philippines.

He refused to surrender until his former commander delivered a "duty order" from Emperor Shōwa in 1974.

He died in 2014, aged 91.

The last known "Japanese" soldier to be fighting on was Teruo Nakamura, born Attun Palalin in Taiwan in 1919.

His hut was seen from the air by a pilot of the Indonesian Air Force on Morotai Island. A search party was sent out and on 18 December 1974, Nakamura was arrested by the Indonesian Air Force

Nakamura decided to be repatriated straight to Taiwan where he was not initially welcome because of his decision to fight under the Japanese flag.

After the law on pensions changed in Japan in 1953, as a private in a colonial unit, Nakamura was no longer entitled to a pension. However, he was awarded ¥68,000. The equivalent to £105, equivalent to £1,200 today.

The Taiwanese Press took up Nakamura's cause leading to the Taiwanese government and the public to donate a total of ¥4,250,000 to Nakamura. The equivalent to £6,536, equivalent to £75,164 today.

He died there of lung cancer five years later on 15 June 1979.

The war with Germany:

The 1945 Potsdam Agreement decided on a full peace treaty concluding World War II, including the exact delimitation of Germany's post-war boundaries.The terms were to be "accepted by the Government of Germany when a government adequate for the purpose is established". The FRG had maintained that no such government could be said to have been established until East and West Germany had been united within a free democratic state.

There was still work to do to bring the war to a legal conclusion. You can see from the table below that it would be a very long wait:

1946:	
14 August – 9 May 1947	"Operation Keelhaul" The Allies' forced repatriation of displaced persons came into force. These included: Families, anti-communists, White Russians, former Soviet Armed forces POWs, foreign slave workers, soldier volunteers and Cossacks, and Nazi collaborators to the Soviet Union. Up to five million people were forcibly handed over to the Russians. On return, most deportees faced imprisonment or execution; on some occasions the NKVD began killing people before Allied troops had departed from the rendezvous points. Allied Control Council created to implement their assumed joint authority over Germany.
13 December	Cessation of hostilities between the United States and Germany was proclaimed by US President Truman.
1947:	
10 February	Paris Peace Conference ends with the signing of peace treaties by the wartime Allies with the former European Axis powers.
1949:	
23 May	The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) founded.
20 September	First FRG government formed.
7 October	German Democratic Republic (GDR) formed.
22 November	Signing of the Petersberg Agreement, an international treaty, intended to end the "state of war" and extend the rights of the FRG (West Germany) with regards to the occupying forces of Britain, France, and the USA.
1950:	
12 September – 19 December:	At a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of France, the UK, and the USA, it was agreed the Western Allies "end by legislation the state of war with the FRG" to strengthen West Germany's position in the Cold War
1951:	
9 July: **26 July:** **19 October:**	**State of war ended with the FRG Germany;** United Kingdom, South Africa and Australia Canada, Italy, New Zealand and the Netherlands USA
1955:	**The state of war between Germany and the Soviet Union was ended.**
1989: 9 November	The East Berlin's Communist Party announced a change in this city's relations with the West. Starting at midnight on 9 November 1989, citizens of the GDR were free to cross the country's borders.
1990:	**The reunification of Germany was made official.**
3 October:	Now the "Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany", the UK, USA, France and the Soviet Union renounced all rights they formerly held in Germany.
1991:	
15 March	Germany became a fully sovereign state.
1994:	In accordance with the Final Settlement Treaty, all Allied occupying troops were withdrawn.

By the end of World War II Britain had amassed a debt of £21 billion. In today's money that is over **£885 billion (more precisely £885,300,391,607.94)**

Sixty years later, on 31 December 2006, Britain made a final payment of about £83m (£65.5m) and thereby discharged the last of its war loans from the US.

The Office of National Statistics have said that, as of **May 2020, the current Covid19 crisis may leave us in debt to the sum of £1950 billion!**

Happier reports to come next year!!!!!

Victory Day - 8 June 1946

Over the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend in 1946, celebrations were arranged all over Swale. In Lynsted and Teynham, events were scheduled for Saturday 8 June and Monday 10 June.

..... More on this next year!