



## Historical Note

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, the Allied Powers formally accepted the unconditional surrender of the Armed Forces of Nazi Germany and the end of the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler had committed suicide on 30<sup>th</sup> April during the Battle of Berlin. The surrender of Germany was therefore authorised by his successor, Grand Admiral Doenitz, and the Instrument of Surrender was signed at Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force at Reims on 7<sup>th</sup> May. This surrender was formally ratified the next day.

More than one million people converged on the streets of the United Kingdom. In London, people thronged the city's streets and monuments. Winston Churchill made a radio broadcast at 3.00 pm announcing that war in Europe was finally at an end.

In the suburbs, parties were thrown, with furniture and tables brought into the street. Fancy dress parades were held for children, and many people went to church to give thanks to God for victory.

Huge crowds, many dressed in red, white and blue, gathered outside Buckingham Palace in London and cheered as the King, the Queen, and the Princesses appeared eight times on the balcony over the day and into the evening, at one point joined by Winston Churchill.

In the evening, many London landmarks, such as the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, and Nelson's Column, were floodlit specially for the occasion. There were fireworks, and effigies of Hitler burned on bonfires around the capital. On the day, crowds sang a popular song which expressed this joyous return to light: 'I'm going to get lit up when the lights go up in London'. Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret—escorted by Guards Officers—left the palace and mingled anonymously with the great crowds outside, joining in the celebrations. In the course of the day, Churchill delivered two short speeches from the balcony of the Ministry of Health building to the crowds in Whitehall. In the first he told them: 'This is your victory!', to which they roared back: 'No! It's yours!'. And during his second appearance at 10.30 pm, he conducted the crowds in the singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

The exuberance of the day was tempered by the fact that, for many, this would be a time of sadness and reflection, and that because of the ongoing war in Japan, many other parts of the world would not be able to join in the celebrations. It would not be until the Japanese surrendered to the Allies on 15<sup>th</sup> August, now known as Victory over Japan Day, that the Second World War would finally come to an end.

Today, in marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory in Europe, we look back with pride and respect at the remarkable generation of men and women who helped secure peace and freedom.