

VE Day

Victory In Europe Day was celebrated on Tuesday 8th May 1945 and marked the end of the war with Germany, although peace officially began on 9th May 1945.

Hitler had committed suicide on 30th April 1945 and the German surrender took place at 2.41am on 7th May at a small schoolhouse in Rheims, France. The fighting went on to the very last minute, with a German submarine sinking two ships off the coast of Scotland on 7th May.

Winston Churchill announced the end of the war on a radio broadcast to the nation at 3pm on 8th May. The country was war-weary, as Britain was the only allied country which had fought from the beginning to the end of the war, so the news was greeted with great relief and pride.

Huge crowds gathered in London to see the King and Queen, who appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with their daughters eight times, and street parties took place all across the country. There were two days of celebrations during which the pubs ran out of beer. The following Sunday, prayers of thanks were said in church and those who had lost their lives for their country were remembered.

VE Day was not, however, the end of the war as many soldiers, sailors and airmen were still needed to fight the Japanese in the Far East where the war continued for a further three months.

1. What does VE stand for and what does it commemorate?

2. Who was Hitler and why was his death so significant?

3. How do you think people felt when they switched on their radios on at 3pm 8th May 1945?

4. Many people probably experienced contrasting emotions when the war finished. What were they and why?

5. Did World War II end on 7th May 1945? Explain your answer.
