# Revealing the untold wild side of VE Day celebrations in 1945



# Celebrating Victory: Surprising Revelries of VE Day

The night of May 7, 1945, marked a watershed moment in British history as the country erupted into jubilant celebrations following the announcement of Germany's surrender. Nearly six years of toil, sacrifice, and suffering came to an end, unleashing a wave of elation that swept across towns and cities. As crowds filled the streets, the atmosphere transformed into one of unrestrained joy, reminiscent of an exuberant party, albeit one steeped in the historical context of wartime Britain.

**An Unforgettable Night of Revelry**

As people celebrated Victory in Europe Day, the scenes were nothing short of chaotic. Revelry took various forms—couples danced in the streets, laughter echoed in pubs, and fireworks brightened the night sky. The then-Princess Elizabeth and her sister Margaret famously joined the throng, seeking a taste of the communal joy. Reflecting on that evening years later, the late Queen would describe it as "one of the most memorable nights" of her life. Many, including Princess Elizabeth, sought not just to be observed but to share in the exhilaration of the moment, mingling unseen with the crowds outside Buckingham Palace.

Amidst the cheers and laughter, the lighter—often more risqué—aspects of the celebrations revealed themselves. Accounts from that night describe more than just public displays of affection; under the cloak of darkness, many revelers engaged in far naughtier behaviour, with one woman notably recounting the sight of couples intimate in the shadows near Buckingham Palace. These firsthand accounts, often shared in letters or diaries, punctuate the historical narrative with a vivid reminder of the emotional release experienced by an exhausted populace.

**The Voices of Those Who Celebrated**

Those who lived through this extraordinary night left behind an invaluable tapestry of memories. Joan Harrison, who was serving as an ambulance driver, recalled receiving the news with disbelief. "I jumped out—I don't think I even locked it," she said, recounting how she ran with her colleague to join the throngs reveling at the NAAFI. The carefree spirit of the night was palpable as soldiers and civilians alike lost themselves in dance and song, supplementing the atmosphere with cheers for leaders like Churchill, whose presence on the balcony of Buckingham Palace amplified the sense of collective triumph.

Reports from newspaper correspondents of the time painted a vivid picture of the chaos. "Bonfires blazed from Piccadilly to Wapping," a reporter wrote, capturing the fervour of Londoners uniting in celebration. Rockets, seemingly supplied by whimsical chance, lit up the sky while crowds overwhelmed the streets, a scene unprecedented in its culmination of shared jubilation following years of strife.

**Camaraderie and Community Spirit**

The liberation galvanized a spirit of community among the masses. Mass Observation, an early social research project, documented the fervour on the streets with a focus on ordinary people's experiences. One account noted the lively mixture of military personnel and citizens from various nations, dancing together in a magnificent display of unity. Such gatherings contributed to the bridging of divides, filling the air with a collective sense of relief, joy, and even chaotic merriment.

The celebrations extended beyond the capital. Cities across the UK, from Liverpool to Glasgow, echoed with laughter and song, with street parties popping up everywhere. In Manchester, families gathered to feast and celebrate, often under makeshift bunting and improvised decorations, helping to solidify a sense of belonging amidst the revelry.

**Reflections on the Roar of Relief**

As exuberant as the celebrations were, they also served as a poignant reminder of the cost of war. The joyous noise contrasted sharply with memories of loss and sacrifice. Among the festivities, there were still echoes of a nation grappling with the remnants of grief—for every laugh shared, there were unspoken condolences for those who would not return.

Today, as we reflect on VE Day, we find not just a celebration of victory but also a testament to resilience. The escapades of that fateful night remind us of the human spirit's capacity for joy, even when it rises from the ashes of hardship. It is a history rich in laughter, tears, and the undeniable connections formed within communities, celebrating not just survival but a shared triumph over tyranny.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/royals/queen-elizabeth-sneaked-crowds-danced-to-celebrate-ve-day-a4435671.html), [[3]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal-family/queen-elizabeth-ve-day-75-princess-margaret-celebrate-london-crowds-king-a9490676.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2020-04-29/princess-elizabeth-celebrated-unnoticed-among-the-crowds-on-ve-day), [[5]](https://www.rct.uk/resources/ve-day-at-buckingham-palace)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.forcesnews.com/news/queen-ve-day-1945-one-most-memorable-nights-my-life)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-photos-of-ve-day-celebrations)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14682191/wild-night-Britain-celebrated-VE-Day-war.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/royals/queen-elizabeth-sneaked-crowds-danced-to-celebrate-ve-day-a4435671.html> - An article detailing how Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret celebrated VE Day in 1945 by mingling with the public outside Buckingham Palace, dancing and joining in chants, providing a rare glimpse into their personal lives during the celebrations.
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal-family/queen-elizabeth-ve-day-75-princess-margaret-celebrate-london-crowds-king-a9490676.html> - A report on how Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, then 19 and 14 respectively, joined the VE Day celebrations in London by slipping into the crowds unnoticed, dancing and participating in chants, highlighting their desire to experience the festivities firsthand.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-04-29/princess-elizabeth-celebrated-unnoticed-among-the-crowds-on-ve-day> - An account of Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret's spontaneous participation in VE Day celebrations in 1945, detailing their activities among the crowds and the reactions of those around them, offering insight into their personal experiences during the historic event.
5. <https://www.rct.uk/resources/ve-day-at-buckingham-palace> - A resource from the Royal Collection Trust providing historical context and details about the Royal Family's appearances on the balcony of Buckingham Palace during VE Day celebrations in 1945, including descriptions of their attire and the public's reactions.
6. <https://www.forcesnews.com/news/queen-ve-day-1945-one-most-memorable-nights-my-life> - An article discussing Queen Elizabeth II's recollection of VE Day 1945 as 'one of the most memorable nights of my life,' highlighting her participation in the celebrations and the significance of the event in her life.
7. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-photos-of-ve-day-celebrations> - A collection of photographs from the Imperial War Museums showcasing various VE Day celebrations in 1945, capturing the jubilant atmosphere and public gatherings across Britain, providing visual context to the historical event.