

10 August 2020

Celebrating 75th anniversary of VJ Day in Guildford

VJ (Victory over Japan) Day, 15 August 1945 marked the day on which Japan surrendered bringing an end to nearly six years of war in the far east - a triumphant day following a war that cost millions of lives and saw unimaginable suffering with thousands held as prisoners of war.

The Mayor of Guildford, Councillor Richard Billington explains: "This is likely to be the last time that we can say our collective, special 'thank you' to the surviving brave veterans of this terrible conflict, many of whom have felt they are the 'forgotten army' during important anniversary commemorations over the last 75 years. That is why it is more important than ever that we show they will NEVER be forgotten by joining together in the national commemorations planned.

At 11am, I will be pausing with the rest of the nation to observe the two-minute silence. As I do, I will reflect on the sacrifices that were made by the many thousands of brave souls that were still engaged in the Asia-Pacific region 75 years ago, and of course will be giving thanks to the surviving veterans, who will never forget the friends they left behind."

He adds: "We must never underestimate the impact that leaving, missing and returning home had on service men and women and their loved ones. Our national remembrance of the 75th anniversaries of VE (Victory in Europe) and VJ Day this year brings home the scale of the service and sacrifice made by the entire Second World War generation for our freedom. Let us never forget their bravery and determination; we shall be forever in their debt."

Our beautiful Castle Grounds will host a special memorial service during the morning of Saturday 15 August. Rvd Canon Robert Cotton will say a few words to commemorate those that lost their lives. The Union Flag on the bowling green will be lowered to half-mast next to the stunning flower bed dedicated to celebrating the 75th anniversary. The Last Post and Reveille will be played by a lone bugler as part of the nationwide two-minute silence at 11am, after which the flag will be raised on Guildford Castle. This will be followed by a performance of 'Cry For Peace around the World' by David Peters, the Guildford Town Crier. The event is not open to the public in order to keep to government guidance but we are filming it and it will be shared on the Council's Facebook page later in the day. The lone bugler will return to the Castle Grounds on Saturday evening to play at sunset to mark the end of the commemorations which will also be available to view on Facebook. Residents are all encouraged to raise a glass with the words "To those who gave so much, we thank you."

To mark the occasion, the Union Flag will fly over Guildford Castle, the Guildhall and Council offices at Millmead. The Castle and Guildhall will also be lit up in red, white and blue. Other events taking place in Guildford include an online service to commemorate VJ Day from Guildford Cathedral at 9.45am on Sunday, 16 August which will be broadcast live via the Cathedral's social media channels.

The recently refurbished Guildford Museum is currently showing the "Commemoration and Celebration - memories and legacies of the Second World War". The small exhibition is a celebration

of both military and civilian heroes which includes a variety of Second World War memorabilia with local relevance.

The Council's Armed Forces Champion Cllr Tom Hunt says: "It is important that we all recognise the sacrifices and lives lost to bring the war to an end. Residents and visitors can pop down to our museum to see the fascinating display dedicated to the lives of local people from 75 years ago or alternatively view some of the collection online on the Council's website. Did you know that East Surrey's entire 2nd Battalion was captured in Singapore in early 1942?"

Elsewhere in the borough, Action for Carers in Surrey want to hear your stories about World War Two so if you had a father, grandfather or uncle that came back from war either in the Pacific or the UK, get in touch. The charity will be hosting a zoom chat on Saturday 15 August from 2-3pm. For more details visit: <https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/event/vj-day-75-celebration/>

Nationally, the Royal British Legion is at the heart of a number of activities throughout the day with commemorations centred around a memorial service at 11am on 15 August which will be live streamed on BBC One from the National Memorial Arboretum. The Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall will lead the UK in a national two minute silence at 11am. After this, army veterans including 93-year-old Albert Wills who served in the Royal Navy will talk about their military memories. The Royal Air Force Regiment band will play and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight will take part in a flypast after the two minute silence. Wreaths will also be laid at various memorial sites in the Far East. If you wish to attend the event, social distancing measures will be in place and there are a limited number of tickets available on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like a ticket, please email: commemorative.events@britishlegion.org.uk.