

Heather Robinson's VE Day memories

Heather was only a child during the war and lived with her mother, father and brother. Her father was unable to join the army due to his health. However, as he had particular expertise in mechanical engineering, he was asked to go and work in the 'Royal Ordnance Factory' in Cardiff. So the family left Somerset and relocated. The 'Royal Ordnance Factory' was otherwise known as the 'Secret Factory' and Heather remembers that despite the factory being a 'secret' it became a target for the German air force. However, the Germans never achieved their target and instead hit the nearby populace. Heather experienced many air raid sirens and civilian homes destroyed by enemy bombs. As a child she remembers feeling like this became the 'norm' in the area that she lived in and as she walked to school there would be new craters that had appeared overnight. In addition to her father's work in the 'Secret Factory' he was also Air Raid Precautions Warden ensuring that people had blacked out their homes.



On VE Day Heather was 9 years old and she does not believe that she realised the enormity of what it meant at the time. On the evening before after the announcement that the war in Europe was over Heather was allowed out alone to a place known as 'the shops' which was a local square and took a saucepan lid and spoon; everyone celebrated, made lots of noise and danced the Conga around the streets. On the following day Heather went with her family back to 'the shops' and the festivities on this day were geared towards the children. They took part in many games and Heather in particular remembers having a bicycle race where the slowest person won (sadly it was not her) with the prize of half a crown. The children also recited poems; Heather was put on a chair outside of the butchers to do her poem. She still remembers the first verse:

'The butcher's shop is open wide,
so everyone can see inside,
he stands there in his coat of blue,
and you can see what he can do.'

There was also dancing and Heather remembers doing the Lambeth Walk (The Lambeth Walk is a song from the 1937 musical *Me and My Girl* and is just an exaggerated idea of how the cockney struts) as well as eating lots of jelly and sandwiches. Heather remembers that there was a tremendous atmosphere of celebration, happiness and release of many emotions that had been pent up over the time we were at war.

(The photograph is of Heather during the war years – she is stood in the middle)