

PRESS RELEASE: The 75th anniversary of VE Day kicks off a year long quest to ask the children of World War II if they have kept their victory message from King George VI.

Today (Friday 8th May) a website (www.aswecelebratevictory.org) is being launched which aims to assess the lasting impact of a message from King George VI to the children of the United Kingdom.

After the adults had partied on VE Day and VJ Day, thoughts moved on to an official national celebration. Alongside organising the London Victory Parade on 8th June 1946, a committee overseen by the Home Secretary commissioned the production of a souvenir card for all school children.

The message, personally overseen by King George VI begins, "TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations."

Paul Shuttleworth, a TV producer inherited his late father's copy 24 years ago. "Some people are comparing our lockdown experience to wartime. I'm pretty sure if my Dad was still alive he'd be telling my children, as he told me, they don't know they're born!"

For many children VE day was the first day they remembered not living in a war zone. For six years children were just as exposed to the horrors of war as their parents. For instance, on Wednesday 20th January 1943 a bomb ripped through Sandhurst Road School, Lewisham and killed 38 children during their lunch hour. This small piece of card is significant because the message is the only national recognition to all the children of World War II.

After finding little information about the message, Shuttleworth decided to build the website as his own personal lockdown project so that he can reach out to the children of World War II and find out how many of them, like his father, kept their message. He's asking anyone who has a copy to complete a short online survey so that he can measure how effective the message was.

"The document seems unique. It's very rare for a world leader to talk directly to children. Having had the opportunity to visit the Royal Archives I know that King George was personally involved in the wording. He was keen not to diminish the part they played in the war and wished on these boys and girls qualities of courage, endurance and enterprise. We'll be asking these children, now in their eighties and nineties, what they wish on the boys and girls of the next generation."

As well as providing the results of the survey, the website will connect the school children of World War II with the school children of today and encourage the nation to remember the children of World War II on 8th June 2021, 75 years after the King's message to the children.

Notes to Editors

Contained with this PDF are accompanying images. Video is also available.

Image 1 - Front side of message

Image 2 - Rear side of message

Crown copyright has expired on the message and reproduction of this copy of the message is granted by the owners, the Albert Shuttleworth Estate.

Image 3 - Three children in the East End of London. Understood to be in the public domain. Originally captioned by the New York Times Paris Bureau Collection as *"Children of an eastern suburb of London who have been made homeless by the random bombs of the Nazi night raiders, waiting outside the wreckage of what was their home."* (National Archives Identifier:[541920](#)) Please credit: USA National Archives and Records Administration

The full wording of the message was...

8th June 1946

TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations. I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

George R.I

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