

Speech by Cllr Grimes for VE80 Celebrations 8th May 2025

I would like to start by reading you the official VE80 Proclamation

“Eighty years ago today the United Kingdom and its allies from around the globe celebrated VE Day – the end of the war in Europe.

Today as we come together to commemorate what came to be known as VE Day our thoughts turn to thanksgiving and remembrance of those millions that gave so much to achieve the freedom, we all enjoy today.

We remember those we lost, those who were wounded or scarred, those whose lives were forever changed by war. Nobody was immune from the impact of that terrible conflict.

We can reflect too upon the words of our late and glorious Queen, Elizabeth – “Never Give Up, Never Despair”

And so we offer our thanks for the selflessness of those who gave up so much in order that future generations should enjoy the blessings of freedom, democracy and peace”

As the proclamation says, “Nobody was immune from the impact”. The war did not often come directly to the parish of Shinfield, but on the 10th February 1943 a lone bomber dropped four bombs on Minster St and Friar St in Reading – just 3½ miles from where we are standing now - killing 41 people the youngest of whom was only 10 years old.

The Parish of Shinfield itself had six men killed during the war and they are named on the War Memorial at School Green.

Many of you will be familiar with the “Few” that fought, and won, the Battle of Britain in 1940 but it is a much smaller number that will know that the headquarters of what was then called RAF Flying Training Command was actually at RAF Shinfield Park in the north of the parish.

Although this is the anniversary of the end of the war in Europe it was of course not the end of the war itself which continued until 15th August 1945 when Japan finally surrendered.

And of course war is something that has never truly gone away. It can and does continue to affect many people in the parish including, but not

limited, to those caught up in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and displaced to homes here. While war and conflict can tear lives apart it can also forge stronger links within and between communities.

And so returning again to VE Day, many celebrated with a bonfire which is why we are here tonight to join with many others across the country to light a beacon for peace and unity.

I would now like to read the Tribute

“Let us remember those who gave their lives at home and abroad, whose sacrifice enables us all to enjoy the peace we have today.

Let us remember those who came home, wounded, physically and mentally, and the friends and family who cared for them.

Let us remember those who returned to restore their relationships and rebuild their working and family lives after years of conflict and turmoil.

Let us remember the families that lost husbands, wives, sons, daughters and sweethearts.

Let us remember the servicemen and women of other nationalities and faiths from Commonwealth and allied countries who fought, suffered and died during six years of war.

Let us remember those in reserved occupations and the brave people who kept us safe on the home front – the doctors, nurses who cared for the wounded, the men and women who toiled in the fields, the fishermen who

fished the seas, those who worked in the factories and the air-raid warden, the police officers, firemen, ambulance drivers and the young people of the Cadets, Scouts and Guides who played such a vital role in the war effort at home.

God Save the King”

We will now ask the Reading Scottish Pipe Band to play one more tune for us and then, with your help, we will light the beacon.