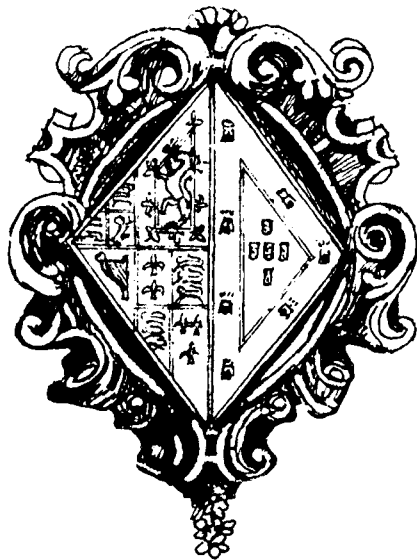


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## WHERE WERE YOU ON VE DAY?

by Dorothy Butterworth

Having just finished a series of night duties in the Fighter Command Ops Room, Exeter, 'A' Watch heard the good news at breakfast time. Our reaction was to say "Thank God, now we can sleep for a week." So we slept through the celebrations in Exeter, saving our energies for the VJ Day fun. For that I found myself in Carew Cheriton near Tenby, having been posted there as a redundant plotter. There were no more cross-Channel sorties either friendly or "Bandit" to plot, no Coastal Command patrols to monitor and warn the fighter pilots about, so apart from a skeleton crew in the OPS Room, the plotters were dispersed to take up other duties until such time as they were demobbed.

I was given clerical duties in the Orderly Room at Carew, mostly making out travel warrants for lucky people going on leave. Would that I could have made out such a warrant for myself to go home, but as home was in Portugal, there was no chance of that.

In 1941 the British in Portugal had been advised by the Consul to send their families to places of safety, as it was thought that Hitler's forces might carry on through France and invade Spain and Portugal. Most families went to the States, Canada or South Africa, well away from the dangers of war in Europe. Where did we go? Right into the thick of it in the UK. We travelled in a troop ship, via Gibraltar, escorted by several naval vessels. We often wondered why we should be so important as to warrant such an escort. Maybe we had a VIP on board. But that is another story. Reaching my Grandmother's house in Worsley, we looked at the situation: my mother went into munitions and then the Censorship Office in Manchester, my sister back to school, and I joined up. I was too young at 17 ½ to join the Wrens so opted for the WAAF (maybe I fancied the blue uniform?), I served for 5 years never seeing my father in all that time. He said goodbye to a schoolgirl and got back a

very grown up daughter. My mother and sister were able to return to Portugal by flying boat in '44.

Back to Carew: one morning we were woken up by a tremendous din. There were sirens, hooters, dustbin lids crashing, and someone was thumping our door with the news that the war in the East was over. That day we spent with most of the population of town and camp dancing in the streets. The three of us also hired horses from the local riding school, and galloped like kids playing cowboys and indians along the beaches. Then we walked back along the harbour, and were hailed by the crew of an ASR (Air Sea Rescue) launch asking if we'd like a trip on the Skylark? We would, so we scrambled on board and put to sea for an hour, not do to any rescuing thankfully. Back in the town we caught the last bus back to camp. It was the RAF double decker packed with RAF and WAAF personnel. The top deck sang all the way back, and so did the lower deck, but not the same songs at the same time. I can't imagine what it sounded like as we passed peaceful farms and villages. All this jubilation was going on without the help of pubs which had all run out of drink and were closed. We were totally lit up on the relief and joy of VJ Day.

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**The above article was taken from a booklet entitled 'Where Were You on VE Day' by the courtesy of Miss Jane Flowers, Librarian of the British Historical Society of Portugal.**