



70

VE DAY

70th Anniversary VE Day Beacons

A shared moment of celebration

8th May 2015

Foreword from Eric Goldrein - Veteran of World War II



Eric Goldrein, 94, from Hale Village, Liverpool, served with the Royal Artillery during the Second World War and was in Italy when the news came through that the war in Europe was over.

VE Day on the 8th May 2015 represents an important milestone in the history of our country and indeed the world. It was the day, 70 years ago, that peace broke out and brought an end to nearly six years of war and carnage across Europe.

We cannot let this day pass without reflecting on the sacrifice, courage and sheer determination of the people who saw us through this dark period. VE Day this year should be a celebration of peace - a time to remember and pay tribute to all those who played their part in achieving it.

The men and women of the armed forces who gave their lives for their country, and those who returned injured in body, mind and spirit. The hard-working women and men who kept our factories, mines, shipyards and farms operating throughout the years of turmoil. The ARP wardens, those who toiled in the fields, the police officers, doctors, nurses and firemen, Local Defence Volunteers and others who put their lives on hold to safeguard the home front.

The 70th anniversary of VE Day will see beacons lit in cities throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man in commemoration of the peace that these and others helped to realise.

At the going down of the sun on the 8th May the first beacon will be lit (at a location to be announced). Minutes later, cities and others the length and breadth of the country will fire their beacons as we celebrate light emerging from the darkness of war, and the triumph of the human spirit.

We hope these will be followed by beacons being lit in many other towns and villages, enabling local communities to remember lost loved ones and the sacrifices they made to secure the peace we all enjoy today.

I wish you all well with the planning of your events.

Eric Goldrein

Introduction

There is a long and unbroken tradition in our country of celebrating Royal Jubilees, Weddings and Coronations with the lighting of Beacons whether they be on mountain tops, town and village greens, country parks and estates, farms and along the beaches surrounding our shores.



Bonfire Beacon (HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee - 4th June 2012).
Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire.

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of VE Day in 1995, Beacons were lit throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man to commemorate the anniversary that day. These flames of peace were accompanied by street parties and all other manner of celebrations to mark this important moment in history, honouring those who gave their lives for the peace we all enjoy today.

VE Day on the 8th May represents a further important milestone in the history of our country. It was the day, 70 years ago, that peace broke out and brought an end to nearly six years of war across Europe. We must not let this day pass without reflecting on the sacrifice, courage and determination of the people who saw us through this dark period. So it is fitting that we should celebrate them and commemorate this historic anniversary once more through the lighting of Beacons on Friday 8th May this year.



Gas Beacon (HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee - 4th June 2012).
Help for Heroes, Ben Nevis, Scotland.

We would therefore like to encourage your council to take part by either re-lighting the beacons that you have used on previous occasions, the last being HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee on the 4th June 2012, or by lighting a Bonfire/Beacon - see page 5, on Monday 8th May this year.

We do hope that you will be able to take part, providing us with the necessary information requested on page 4, along with undertaking the lighting ceremony outlined for that evening.



Bruno Peek

Bruno Peek LVO OBE OPR
Pageantmaster
70th Anniversary VE Day Beacons



Beacon lighting ceremony and tribute



To confirm your involvement please send the following information to:
pageantmaster@mac.com or
brunopeek@mac.com as soon as possible.

Name of council or organisation
Name of contact/co-ordinator
Postal address including postcode
Telephone number/s
Mobile number
Email
Location of beacon/bonfire, including postcode

If your event is open to the public your contact details will be shared with the media so that they can contact you to arrange publicity. We will also list your Beacon location on the official VE Day website and in regional and local news publications. (All those taking part in the lighting of Beacons or bonfires should discuss their plans with their local fire and rescue services).

Beacon Lighting Ceremony - 21.30hrs

The Beacon lighting ceremony should be undertaken as follows:

Step 1: Source a Cadet from one of the three service youth organisations, or a young person from a local band to play a fanfare to announce the start of the lighting ceremony.

Step 2: The Tribute. This aspect of the event will provide the opportunity for a World War II veteran to pay tribute to old comrades and those who stayed behind to safeguard the home front. Please liaise with your local branch of The Royal British Legion when choosing the veteran.

This Tribute should be read out just before the lighting of the Beacon.

The Tribute

- Let us remember those who gave their lives at home and abroad, whose sacrifice enables us 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 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 and nurses who cared for the wounded, the men and women who toiled in the fields, those who worked in the factories and the air-raid wardens, police officers, firemen, ambulance drivers and the young people of the Scouts and Guides who all played such a vital role in the war effort at home.

Step 3: Please light your Beacon at 21.30hrs. It should be lit by the Lord Mayor, Mayor, Lord Provost, High Sheriff or another Civic Officer of your choice. It would be especially poignant if the person lighting the Beacon was accompanied by a young person and a World War II veteran. Please liaise with your local branch of the Royal British Legion when choosing the veteran. The young person could be the winner of a competition organised in association with your local media.

We do hope that you enjoy your part in this historic occasion and wish you all well with your planning.



Bonfire Beacon

Locate the bonfire at least 30m away from buildings, roads, railways and public rights of way, and a safe distance from dangerous materials and overhead power lines. Ensure it has good access for the transportation of materials for the bonfire and sufficient space for spectators to stand upwind.

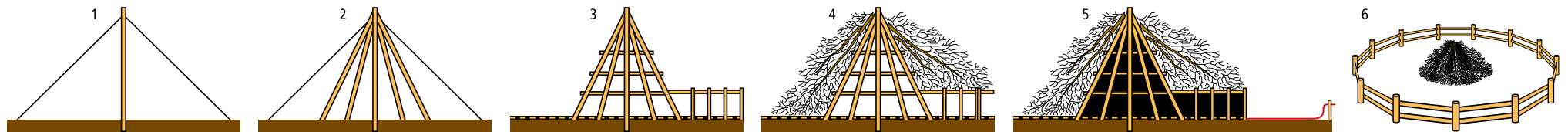
Obtain the landowner's permission and involvement.

Liaise with local fire brigade and emergency services, presenting them with your plans, and seek their advice and support.

1 Prepare site by removing top layer of turf and stack away from fire area. Obtain seven poles, 5-6m in length. Attach four guy ropes to top of one pole and anchor as shown.

2 Erect remaining poles as shown, ensuring tops are secured in place.

3 Use either pallets or suitable lengths of timber, spreading them over ground area of beacon for a good through draught. Secure timber horizontally between poles as shown, preventing material placed over the framework from dropping through. Construct access tunnel to the middle of the beacon. Keep middle empty until required. Always construct the bonfire so it collapses inwards as it burns.



4 Use only wood for combustible materials. Do not burn dangerous items such as foam-filled furniture, old tyres, aerosols or tins of paint. Build upwards until height of centre pole is reached. Materials around top should be loosely packed to allow air flow. Cover bonfire to keep it dry.

5 Fill centre with suitable, dry combustible materials. Check construction is stable and remove any unsuitable materials that may have been added. Look specifically for fireworks, aerosols, highly inflammable materials or containers with such materials.

6 Construct a safety barrier out of ropes and stakes or scaffold poles to ensure public is kept at a safe distance from the fire.

7 In daylight, and just before lighting, check that there are no children or animals playing or hiding in the bonfire. Arrange for, and brief sufficient numbers of marshals.

8 The person looking after the fire should not wear lightweight clothing that could ignite easily. They should wear a substantial outer garment of wool, or other material of low flammability, and stout boots. They should know what to do in the event of a burn injury, or a person's clothing catching fire, and should have a fire blanket ready in the bonfire area along with a number of fire extinguishers.

9 Lighting: the safest and recommended approach is to use paper and solid firelighters in six places just inside the walls of the beacon to ensure an even burn. Never use flammable liquids such as paraffin or petrol to get it going as this can result in uncontrolled spread of fire or explosion.

10 To light the beacon: from poles 2m in length, prepare hand torches for lighting with paraffin-soaked rags wired around one end. Remember, paraffin is dangerous and great care should be taken. Paraffin can be used as directed, but it is still dangerous and should at all times be treated with great care - for example, always ensure all excess paraffin is drained off rags before use. If spilt on your clothes during the preparation of your beacon lighting you should replace those items of clothing before approaching any naked flames. In particular, always remember to replace the lid on any container of unused paraffin and store it in a safe place away from naked flames. Do not use an accelerant on the fire itself.



Bonfire Beacon (HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee - 4th June 2012). Republic of Ireland.

Legal Essentials and Safety



If you are inviting personal guests to your home it is worth checking with your household insurer that you are covered in the unfortunate circumstances that there should be an accident. If your event includes inviting the public, or it is a third party venue then, where applicable, the following advice should be heeded, to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable event for everyone involved.

Licensing

Generally, all public entertainment has to be licensed by the local authority. The law on this aims to ensure the safety of the public and performers. Local authorities treat each event individually, and what one will allow another will not. Do not be put off by the length of some of the forms - the licensing officer is there to help you.

The licensing officer's job is to advise the local authority's licensing committee on the granting of public entertainment licenses. For small scale events he or she, in effect, makes the decision. Only if your event is contentious will the licensing committee decide to consider the application in detail. Talk to the licensing officer as soon as possible. In Northern Ireland, if you plan to sell alcohol at an event, you will need to apply for an occasional liquor license from the Northern Ireland Court Service.

Insurance

Unfortunately accidents can happen at even the best organised events. Therefore you will need to consider and obtain insurance cover for your event, whether you are holding an event on your own premises or someone else's. Beacon/Bonfire events require specialist public liability cover. If you hire a park or venue or use land owned by a third party for your activity, they are likely to require you to have your own suitable insurance to cover your liability for any injury to the public or damage to other people's land or property.

If hiring equipment for the event, you may need to insure these items; you may also need to consider cover for loss

of any financial outlay you incur if the event has to be cancelled for reasons beyond your control, or loss of money, particularly if you are holding a fund-raising event.

To help you obtain the appropriate insurance, and risk management advice, we are working closely with Unity Insurance Services, which is a specialist insurance broker in the voluntary and non-profit sector. They have developed a range of bespoke insurance covers specifically for the Beacon/Bonfire events, underwritten by Ansvr Insurance. Both Unity and Ansvr are owned by charities and donate all their available profits back to charity.

To obtain a quote or for more details or advice on the insurance cover you may need, please visit Unity's website, www.unityinsuranceservices.co.uk/veday or telephone them on 0345 040 7702.



Alternatively, the licensing officer may be able to direct you to a suitable specialist company or broker, but you should not try to source this kind of insurance from a non-specialist.



Emergency Services

Tell the police well in advance about the type of event you are planning, and get in touch with your local community police officer. Write to the fire brigade and ambulance service, particularly if you are planning to have a Beacon/Bonfire, fireworks, or an event that will attract a large crowd. St John's Ambulance and the British Red Cross will provide first aid and sometimes a vehicle. In some areas they are simply happy to receive a donation. In others, expect a fee to be charged.



Food and Drink

Basic food hygiene guidelines should be followed at all times if you are providing

food and drink. Caterers must have food hygiene certificates. Advice on this subject can be obtained from your local council environmental officer.



Alcohol

If you want to sell alcohol you will need to secure a licence. From February 2005, licenses are granted by the local authority rather than the Magistrates Court. You should therefore contact your local authority licensing section and seek information from them on how to apply. During 2005 all existing licenses have to be renewed and this will inevitably lead to long lead-in-times. Please apply as early as possible.



Site Clearance

The local authority will arrange for clearance and disposal of litter after your event if it is on public ground (check for possible charges). You can help this process by arranging litter bins or recycling bins around the site, and a crew to clear up throughout the event.



Hiring or Borrowing Equipment

Your local authorities, or local event organisers may be able to help you with contacts for supplies such as marquees, portable toilets, barriers and bunting, or may in some cases have these for you to hire and borrow. You may also need to consider generators, a public address system, and emergency flood lighting. If you need to arrange insurance for your hired equipment, Unity Insurance Services can arrange this for you too.



All Ability Access

Access for the disabled is very important. Many local authorities run community transport schemes. Talk to them about arranging transport. On green field sites access may be improved by cutting the grass before the event.



Photo: © Imperial War Museums.



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Back cover photo: Bonfire Beacon (HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee - 4th June 2012), Inveraray Castle, Scotland. © Inveraray Castle.

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