

Railway to mark 75th Anniversary of VE Day

May 8, 2020



Stations around the country will echo the sounds of the past today as they pay tribute to the people who gave their lives in the Second World War to bring peace to Europe.

Although the stations are significantly quieter than usual, people that do have to travel will be immersed in the stories and experiences of 1945, thanks to Imperial War Museums' *Voices of War*. The soundscape, which brings together first-hand accounts of VE Day from the museum's extensive sound archive, will be played in the stations, with images from VE Day shown on advertising screens.

In addition, the end of the two minutes' silence at 1100 will be marked by the sounds of *We'll Meet Again*, as performed by the D-Day Darlings, and a wreath will be laid at London Bridge's war memorial by soldiers in uniform.

The collaboration with Imperial War Museums was the idea of Network Rail's Southern region, to commemorate the day in its London stations including Waterloo, Victoria and London Bridge, and has been taken up across the country with stations from Edinburgh to Bristol joining in.

Network Rail Southern region managing director John Halsall said: "Britain's railways and railway staff played a massive part in the journey to Victory in Europe and as extraordinary as these times are, we knew we had to pay tribute to those men and women who gave so much so we can live in freedom today."

“Working for the railway gives everyone here a close connection to the past as the history of our stations and tracks goes so deep and so far back. The railway lines we manage from London to the South Coast carried our soldiers to and from the front lines through the war and the memorials at our stations are testament to the heroism showed by everyone on those trains and the men and women who kept Britain moving right through until the final acts of the war in May 1945.”

Diane Lees, Director-General of Imperial War Museums, said: “The events of 8 May 1945 have helped to define the world we live in as the costliest conflict in human history began to draw to a close. The need to commemorate this national anniversary and remember the sacrifices made by past generations is as important now as it ever was. With *Voices of War*, IWM is giving people the opportunity to listen to the stories and memories of those who lived through the conflicting jubilation, hope, sadness and fear that was felt during the summer of 1945. So whether you hear the broadcast at a train station or are listening at home, we invite everyone to be part of this important national moment.”

Katie Ashby from the D-Day Darlings said: “We are so proud to be able to deliver a special message on such a momentous day, to all the people who are continuing to keep us safe.”

Meanwhile in Scotland, the country’s biggest train stations will hold a series of events, with Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley holding two-minute silences and wreath laying ceremonies at the stations’ war memorials at 11:00.

At 15:00 train horns will be sounded in the stations followed by lone pipers – Network Rail engineer Darach Urquhart at Central and LNER train manager David Johnston at Waverley – playing ‘When the Battle’s Over’.

Network Rail has also commissioned Glasgow-based poet Erin Boyle to produce a piece commemorating WWII, and the pandemic challenge facing the nation today, which will be posted on social media channels on VE Day.

Liam Sumpter, Network Rail Scotland route director, said: “Rail had a key role in Britain’s war effort in the 1940s moving troops and materials around the nation.

“Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley would have also played a poignant part in many personal experiences of the war as the point of departure for service personnel travelling south, many for the last time.

“We are determined that, despite the very different challenge the country is facing today, our stations will take a moment to remember the sacrifices made on our behalf 75 years ago.”

The Rail Delivery Group, which represents Network Rail and all train operating companies, has arranged for a train horn salute to take place at 3pm on the day, alongside rail workers taking part in the national toast to the heroes of the Second World War.

Photo credit: Network Rail