

## Tales from the country...

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English

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On Tuesday, May 8, I was living at **Wold Newton** and working at the Yarborough Hotel in Grimsby.

We knew Hitler had given up the ghost and were told that the Prime Minister Winston Churchill was to make an announcement to the nation at 3pm.

I left work around 1pm and caught the bus which only went as far as Ravendale, leaving me to cycle the other three miles home.

On my way I met lorries full of men of the Royal Army Service Corps who for some reason were resting on the road side.

"Any news yet?" they asked. I shook my head and peddled on.

"Anybody got a radio?" another asked. I nodded my head.

"Yes - we have - the only one in the village," I answered.

And almost before I had time to get into the house crowds of soldiers and village people had gathered at our gate.

"Can we come in, blacky?" they asked.

Dad shook his head but opened the front window and put the old battery radio on the sill.

When Big Ben chimed you could hear a pin drop. Everyone stood in absolute silence as Churchill told us that we had won the victory in Europe.

The RASC went back to their lorries and soon the smell of a good old fry-up hovered over the village.

About five o'clock Johnny Willerton and his brother Aubrey brought out their piano accordions and started playing popular songs. And we started dancing down the village street. We danced and sang the night away and arranged to go to a dance the following night.

I think the information came via the foreman's telephone. There were no newspapers and no transport - but the country was not at a standstill.

We decided to cycle to the dance at North Thoresby and spent all day preparing for an event to remember.

Unfortunately it rained, but not to be outdone we decided to carry on regardless.

The only problem was my dress, made of the old crepe de chine which curled up when wet.

The result was that I arrived at the dance in what must have been the first mini dress and we spent around an hour pulling it down and around until it had dried and was a reasonable size and sight.

The old schoolroom was overflowing and so no-one really noticed my dress as we jitterbugged, waltzed and did the tango. We went through all the old sentimental songs such as "We'll Meet Again" and the Hokey-Cokey almost brought the roof down.

I was persuaded to sing "We'll gather Lilacs" but I don't think it was much of a performance.

As always we ended the evening with the national anthem and as we sang the first words of "God Save our Gracious King" there was not a dry eye in the place.

I looked across at Vera Smith who had spent the evening serving refreshments and joking with everyone and marvelled at her bravery. Her son had been killed at Arnhem leaving a young widow and son. I thought of Barbara Dome, an unmarried mother whose young man was a prisoner in Japan. Happiness and pride was tinged with sadness.