**Crediton Vicar’s WW2 VE Day Sermon Shared by Daughter 80 Years On**

A retired GP and churchwarden from Devon whose father was Vicar of Crediton during World War Two has shared the handwritten sermon he wrote to celebrate VE Day ahead of the 80th anniversary on 8 May.

Jane Richards, 91, was 11 in 1945, when Victory in Europe Day, marking the official end of the Second World War in Europe, was declared on 8 May 1945.

Her father, the Rev’d Francis Richards, had been a minor Canon at St Paul’s Cathedral during the London blitz and was on fire warden duty in the dome of the cathedral the night a bomb landed on the steps and bounced down them.

In 1940 he moved to become Vicar of Crediton, to provide a safer environment for his growing family.

**“Many of us lived through moments when we wondered whether we ourselves should be spared to see [victory] come to pass.” Rev’d Francis Richards, May 1945**

Jane said he used to write each of his sermons by hand in a series of notebooks he kept in alphabetical order. She inherited the notebooks when he died and was recently showing one of them to the Archdeacon of Exeter, when it fell open to his sermon of 13 May 1945.

It starts with the words *“During this past week great events have come to a final issue, and we have celebrated the day of victory in Europe to which we had long been looking forward. No doubt you have all been reading reviews of the progress of the war through these years in your newspapers, and I need not quote instances here to remind you how often or for how long, the prospect of victory seemed remote and unattainable, and many of us lived through moments when we wondered whether we ourselves should be spared to see it come to pass.”*

Rev’d Richards also acknowledges in his sermon that it was a bittersweet victory for many people: *“Our Lord came back with wounds in His hands and feet and side – let that not be forgotten by those who have come to the end of this German war wondering whether they can or ought to rejoice, because there has been so much sorrow; our Lord’s experience is the same – the joy that was set before him was only reached through death and wounds.”*

Sunday 13 May 1945 was the Sunday after Ascension day and Jane said she was particularly struck by the parallels her father drew between VE Day and Jesus’ Ascension into heaven after his resurrection. She said, “I think that was a very prescient comment to make and one that people could dwell on.”

Jane also said she could clearly remember living in Crediton during the war: “The bombing of Exeter in 1942 is very clearly etched on my memory, because it was a Sunday night and we had to get out.

“One bomb was dropped, and all our windows fell in. Daddy was up in the tower of Crediton church on watch and realised. Mama got us in a pram and pushed us across the playing field to the local doctor’s, who was a friend.”

Rev’d Richard’s sermon ends *“Our victory in Europe is won, but there is a long job ahead to make liberty available again to everybody. But can’t you see it is a job after God‘s own heart, since he himself is doing the same thing? If God is with us, in the fight, in the sorrow, in the victory, in the rejoicing, in the reconstruction – if God is with us, who can be against us?”*

Jane said if her father were here today his reflections on the 80th anniversary of VE Day would probably be to “Keep the faith, don’t doom. Remember, Christ is there all the time for us. Then, as appropriate at that time and now, in this rather different, shifting sort of time. He is always there, and this was an example of it.”

**You can watch a video interview with Jane Richards here:** [**https://vimeo.com/1080143748**](https://vimeo.com/1080143748)