



# News

For the attention of: television and news editors

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## **Shooting the War – A Nation on Film VE Day Special**

The successful BBC and Open University series ***Nation on Film*** returns this May with a special episode – *Shooting the War* – to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day.

Using amateur archive, *Shooting the War* tells the story of how amateur film makers managed to capture differing aspects of wartime Britain, from family life in a bomb shelter in the back garden to a Battle of Britain dogfight occurring directly overhead of an amateur film-maker's house.

A highlight of the programme is recently discovered footage which will be broadcast for the first time – including the only amateur film ever taken of the Battle of Britain. New material has also emerged, showing victory celebrations in Wakefield, as well as footage of the then Princess Elizabeth.

Contrasting the amateur recordings will be professionally shot archive, providing a rich and unique portrayal of how the war shaped daily life in Britain, including post-war events such as the compulsory purchase of land to build new homes, and the mass squatter movement.

“The programme provides a different perspective to the war through the personal stories of the people who featured in the film and those who made them,” says *Shooting the War* producer and director Rosalind Bain.

A radio appeal by the programme producer for amateur footage resulted in the inclusion of the scenes of VE Day celebrations in Wakefield, which had never before been seen outside the family who shot them: “It has added a real element of personal participation to the programme.”

“Combined with the colourful commentary from those featured in the films, heard as the unique and personal footage unfolds, the programme allows those watching to be taken directly back through history, as if they too were living in war-time Britain or taking part in the VE Day celebrations,” she says.

Archive of the celebrations includes vast street parties in Cardiff and huge bonfires as black-out screens burned in Croydon.

Says Jon Gowlland, son of amateur film-maker Geoffrey Gowlland: “On VE Day itself we children were allowed to carry out the blackout screens and we put them in a pile on the empty lot on the opposite side of the road from us. One of the children was quite concerned about this and said won’t the wardens be cross with us tomorrow – that’s how we children get accustomed to these things. That night our parents woke us up to go to the window and look out and we had a bonfire of them.”

Gillian Britton, daughter of film-maker Reginald Iles, said of the celebrations in Cardiff: “My father wanted to record VE Day and I can remember him giving this bottle of wine to my mother to hold. Obviously it didn’t mean quite so much to my sister and I – and I knew it was a very happy time but my parents were obviously very, very relieved.”

*Shooting the War* will screen on BBC TWO and BBC Four in May.

## Editor’s Notes

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***Nation on Film*** is scheduled for transmission on 8 May 2005 at 19.30 on BBC Four and 13 May 2005 at 22.00 on BBC TWO but viewers are advised to check their television listing guide for confirmation.

This programme is part of the BBC’s V45 season – marking the end of WW2.

Other Open University and BBC productions currently being or soon to be broadcast are *Journeys from the Centre of the Earth*, *Maternity Ward* and *Ever Wondered About Food*

## Resources

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### Web

Website: [http:// www.open2.net](http://www.open2.net)

### Media contact

Gabi Nobis                      g.nobis@open.ac.uk                      +(44) 1908 655026