

Peace in Europe Conference Newsletter

Number Three. 11 April 2025

WW2TV founder to deliver keynote address at The Peace in Europe Conference

The opening keynote address at The Peace in Europe Conference at London Scottish House on 10 May will be delivered by Paul Woodadge, the ground-breaking founder of the WW2TV YouTube show.

Paul has produced more than 1,700 interviews about every aspect of the conflict since WW2TV was launched.

A historian, author, battlefield guide as well as host of WW2TV, Paul's passion for the Second World War was fuelled by his great uncle Cyril Rand, a Royal Ulster Rifles officer who landed on Sword Beach on D-Day. After many visits, Paul moved to Normandy in 2001 and began a battlefield guiding company. He has written two military history books and is currently working on a third about the US VIII Corps and the battle of La Haye-du-Puits. He is a regular guest on podcasts including *Someone Talked!* (the official podcast of the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia); *What's The Scuttlebutt* and the WW2 podcast with James Holland and Al Murray.



Paul has consulted on history programmes by The History Channel, Discovery and the BBC. He has spoken at conferences and festivals, including at the *We Have Ways Fest*, *The Society of Military History* and *The Peace in Europe* conferences and is regularly cited by fellow historians in their books on the Second World War and especially Normandy.

Later this year, Paul will be appearing as an expert commentator in a Second World War documentary series produced by Tom Hanks.

"Paul has made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the Second World War," says

Peace in Europe Conference director Edmund O'Sullivan. "We are delighted he will be the opening speaker at our event."



Imperial War Museum to hold VE Week events

The Imperial War Museum has announced activities to mark the anniversary of the end of the war.

- **Free concert** by members of the English Chamber Orchestra in the atrium of IWM London on 15 April. They will perform *Life, Liberation and Legacy* featuring music from celebrated composers including Benjamin Britten, Frederic Chopin, Robert Schumann and Hans Neumeyer, who died in the Holocaust. The concert will take place at 11am, 1pm and 3pm.
- **The VE Day 80 late party** on the evening of 5 May on HMS Belfast. Music will be provided by vocal trio The Charlalas and there will be history reenactors and guided tours. Tickets are limited. You can find out more here: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/ve-day-80-late>
- Families and communities are invited to join **family hubs** at IWM London and IWM North on 5 May. There will be street parties and other family-oriented activities.
- **Live performance of songs from the 1940s** to the present sung by London choirs between 3pm and 330pm on 5 May at IWM London organised in collaboration with **Sweet Track Productions**.
- **A special VE Day event** will take place at IWM North on Wednesday 7 May which will involve the presentation of letters submitted by the public for the IWM's *Letters to Loved Ones* campaign.



Busby in 1939 with future Manchester City manager Joe Mercer (left).

Matt Busby and how the war changed football

The declaration of war on 3 September 1939 was immediately followed by the suspension of competitive football in England, though regional competitions were established.

For professional footballers, an alternative way of life emerged in the form of service in Britain's armed forces. **Matt Busby**, then 30, had just completed four seasons playing for Liverpool. A combative and intelligent midfield player who was a Scottish international, he had been made club captain earlier in 1939. That May, he was joined at Liverpool by **Bob Paisley** who was to become the club's most successful manager.

Busby was named Manchester United manager in February

1945 and was to go on to lead the team that won the European Cup in 1968. He signed up for the King's Liverpool Regiment but quickly transferred to the Army Physical Training Corps depot in Aldershot where he became a coach but continued to play for top clubs. Many professional soccer players served in the armed forces including future Manchester City and England manager Joe Mercer (see photograph above).

At that time, British footballers were considered to be the best in the world. Following Allied landings on mainland Italy in September 1943, the Allied Military Government launched a campaign to win over the local population. One of its instruments was exhibition football matches involving British Armed Forces teams, which mainly comprised international players, and local clubs.

Busby and other footballers who served in the Second World War were to have a massive impact on the game after the war. The story of football in the Second World War will be shared at the Peace in Europe Conference in London Scottish House on 10 May by **Alex Alexandrou**, Co-Founder and Chair of the Football & War Network.

The extraordinary legacy of the Polish armed forces

In June 1940, the Polish Government-in-exile signed an agreement to form an independent Polish Army, Air Force and Navy under British operational command.

In the Battle of Britain, 5 per cent of RAF pilots were Polish. The 303 (Polish) Fighter Squadron was recognised as the most successful Allied squadron of the war. The Polish Air Force flew alongside the RAF until the war ended. Almost 20,000 Poles served in the RAF.

Polish Navy vessels fought alongside the Royal Navy. British ships and submarines were crewed by Polish personnel: 4,000 Poles served with the Polish Navy during the war.

The Polish II Corps -- which was formed in the Middle East mainly from men released from Soviet prison camps in 1941 -- served on the Italian mainland including in the Battle of Monte Cassino. It numbered more than 100,000 soldiers by the end of the war. Polish soldiers evacuated to Britain following the occupation of Poland served in Normandy following D-Day and in the Battle of Arnhem.

The story of Polish Armed Forces in the West and their legacy will be told at The Peace in Europe Conference by historian and researcher **Jenny Grant**.



**Book your place at the Peace in Europe Conference at London Scottish House
on Saturday 10 May here:**

<https://www.eventbrite.it/e/the-peace-in-europe-conference-tickets-1105057409459>