

VE Day 80 Burgess Hill

Thursday 8 May 2025

3 events 1 Day

Budget: £3,000 from Town Council

Funding secured from Mid Sussex District Council £2,000

£275 from Good Oaks Homecare towards cost of food for luncheon party

Spent:£4,450 total. Most significant costs were:

£250 additional toilets to supplement MSDC

£325 musical performances

£486 Lemonade Printing costs publicity

£1800 stage and OBU

£200 face painting

£275 for children's entertainment

£150 brass band

£200 bins to collect waste

£320 traditional games

£180 security

Aim:

To mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, Burgess Hill Town Council organised a lineup of both celebratory and reflective events set to take place on Thursday, 8 May. The Town Council was proud to deliver a full day of activities, with a special pre-event tea party on Thursday, 1 May. The celebrations aimed to bring the community together, honouring this important historical milestone

Event Breakdown:

Pre-Event Tea Party – Thursday 1 May

Tickets were available for a delightful pre-event tea party held at the Kingsweald Community Centre. The event featured a light tea and was supported by generous sponsorship from GoodOaks Homecare and the Co-op. Burgess Hill Girls School provided entertainment. This tea party offered a warm and welcoming occasion for residents to begin the VE Day celebrations early. Table decorations were created by the Burgess Hill Yarnbombers and the hall was decorated with red, white and blue bunting.

VE Day 80 – Thursday 8 May

The day began with a poignant Raising of the Flag service at 9:00 am, held in the War Memorial Garden. The service was led by Father David from St John the Evangelist, with support from the Salvation Army band. Local dignitaries, including representatives from the Town Council, the Royal British Legion, and local hero John Buck, were part of the service. The Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex was invited and attended and the local MP, Alison Bennet, was also in attendance.

At 12:30 pm, invited community groups were treated to a Street Luncheon Party in the Town Centre. Entertainment was provided by Southway Junior School and Burgess Hill Girls School, alongside roving ukulele performers. A special Cake Competition was held, with entries to be delivered to the Theatre Club between 11:00-11:30 am for judging. The cakes were served to attendees and passersby. Good Oaks Home

care funded the luncheon and Burgess Hill Martlets Womens Institute supported with providing cakes, both assisted the Town Mayor with cake judging. ITV Meridian News approached the Town Council on 7 May, and we discussed coverage and agreed the lunchtime event would be a great opportunity to showcase Burgess Hill widely. Burgess Hill Creative Community support the decoration of tables and also assisted with serving our community groups.

The grand finale took place at St John's Park in the afternoon, starting at 4:30 pm, the Main Event featured a packed entertainment programme, food and drinks, and a range of activities for all ages. Local favourites, including the Burgess Hill Bonfire Society's BBQ, Olly's Fish Shack, the Cricket Club Bar, and the Park View Kiosk, offered food and beverages. Guests enjoyed traditional games in the dedicated games area, and we encouraged everyone to dress in red, white, and blue, adding to the celebratory atmosphere.

At 6:30 pm, the Ringing of the Bells at St John's the Evangelist provided a solemn reminder of the significance of VE Day. The event culminated with the Lighting of the Beacon at 9:30 pm, followed by a rendition of I Vow to Thee My Country.

Free activities were provided for the public to enjoy at the main park event:

- Free entertainment provided by local performers on a stage.
- Cinema screen style publicity to the right of the stage that promoted the evening timetable of performances and forthcoming Town Council events.
- VE Themed photobooth provided by Central Sussex Rotary.
- Classic vehicle display provided by Weald Classic Car club featuring a large red bus on to the site.
- Traditional games to include a coconut shy, beat the buzzer, pick up sticks, stocks, chess and dominoes.
- A face painter providing a choice of designs.

Number of attendees:

Event 1 tea party held on 1 May - 69 residents.

Event 2 held on Thursday 8 May - estimated footfall of 150 in and around the war memorial garden.

Event 3 held on Thursday 8 May - estimated footfall of 250 in and around Church Walk, outside the Help Point.

Event 4 held on Thursday 8 May - estimated footfall of 1,500 in St John's Park across the 5-hour event (4.30pm – 9.30pm.)

Publicity:

The event was advertised in many places as set out below:

- Full social media plan of posts on the Town Council Facebook and Instagram in advance. Live posts on the day to encourage attendees and share live activities.
- Posters in the Help Point Window – the event title poster, 3 events one day and then an updated poster focusing on the two public events held on 8 May.
- Press release - it was featured in the Mid Sussex Times as an article and several times in the Town and Village news section. A post event press release was issued on 9 May 2025.
- All noticeboards in the town – 18.
- Poster displayed at Nationwide Community Board and at the station.
- 4 banners in prominent locations – Triangle roundabout, St John's Park (London Road), Burgess Hill Girls and McDonalds Roundabout.
- 3 A1 correx boards – sited at Bandstand (central location in town), the Help Point (back up bandstand) and at the park outside the kiosk.

- Sent directly to 589 people via the events notification mailing list.
- Coverage in About Town March edition, with full page write up and the front page dedicated to the event.
- Dedicated web page that was updated regularly and was a featured item on the front page.
- Post event – the event was featured on ITV Meridian News on the evening of the event.
- We also secured sponsorship from Burgess Hill Girls for a commemorative programme that was an A5 eight-page document that publicised all four events and was available widely in the community from April.

Feedback:

Funds raised by Community Groups as a result of attending was £2426, broken down as follow:

Burgess Hill Bonfire Society £700

Burgess Hill Bonfire Society £500

St John's Church cake stall £450

St John's Church £176

Cricket Club bar £600

On Friday 9 May, a press release was issued, and a social media post requesting feedback too. This was also an opportunity to promote our Events Mailing List. Comments received via our QR were as follows

What went well:

- Community spirit, felt safe;
- Brilliant afternoon/evening enjoyed by the community well done to the council and all involved.
- A really lovely time was had by all. A beautiful tea, lovely singing from schoolchildren and a very well organised event. Thank you, Burgess Hill Council.

Would be better if:

- The only thing I would say was it was difficult to hear what was being said in speeches before tea in Church Walk.

We have also received several emails thanking us for the events and social media comments were extremely positive too.

Team debrief of the event, on Friday 9 May captured various points:

- Safe event with no incidents, public were happy with all the activities and entertainment – great verbal feedback on the day
- Food vendors had steady queues and were pleased at end of event
- New gazebo worked well in all locations
- TV Coverage put Burgess Hill on the map
- Closure signs for queues worked well and were monitored over event in the park.

Even Better If:

- More time allowed for decorating of the tables;
- More time allowed for movement and putting away of barriers – created a bottle neck at evening event with pressure to get the event set up.

Evaluation:

The Town Council New Gazebo was set up across the day on 8 May, providing meeting point for Rising the Flag, shelter for the refreshments for the luncheon party on Church Walk and finally our security and first aid point for the main event in the park. It has a striking appearance and it is clear that there needs to be a defined use for it. It was also the lost children point, but fortunately neither first aid of lost child was

required. Three additional toilets were provided for the event in view of footfall and additional rubbish bins were sourced externally.

The Town Council secured funding from three local businesses to support the events delivered specifically GoodOaks Homecare who sponsored the hire of the venue for the Pre VE Day tea party at Kings Weald community centre and provided the lunch for the street party held on Church Walk and Burgess Hill Girls School for sponsoring the Commemorative Programme. Coop also provided food for the VE DAY 80 launch event held on 1 May. These relationships continue to be developed, and further sponsorship has been established with other Town Council events. These contributions were acknowledged in social media and press releases issued.

Coverage in the Mid Sussex Times on Thursday 15 May front page included below with further photos of the four events:

Centre pages from the Mid Sussex Times are attached at Appendix 1.

Jennifer O'Grady
Head of Community Engagement Team

May 2025





