

A Chronology of World War Two

In many ways the most effective form of index to the newspaper covered in this project is a chronology of the period. After all, the newspapers all focused on the same basic news stories, responding as quickly as they could to the events happening around them. Of course, there were difficulties involved in communicating between London and the far flung frontiers of the war, or to imposed censorship. As a result, some stories are reported a day or more after the events themselves.

Despite the fact that the news reporters attended the same briefings and were in receipt of the same official bulletins from their own independent reporters active in the war-zones (some actually active behind enemy lines), with their own unsyndicated pictures, and with special articles commissioned and copyrighted by the papers. As such, a brief chronology of events serves to direct the reader to the issues covered by all or most of the newspapers, if not to the style or substance of the coverage.

The chronology for each year begins with a brief summary of the major events of the year (in bold type), and a list of the books, films and records which appeared (in italic). There then follows a more detailed calendar of the events of the year.

With regard to films, the initial year of release has been given as Hollywood columns often give detail of new films released in the States. Please note, however, that many were not released in Britain for another six to twelve months.

This chronology does not attempt to be comprehensive but it is hoped that it will help researchers to track down stories of interest.

For ease of reference, the chronology for each year has been started on a new page.

1939

In the wake of the Munich agreement of September 1938 ("peace in our time") Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister) and Lord Halifax (Foreign Secretary) continue to pursue a policy of appeasement, hoping to avert a further ruinous war. Repeated diplomatic missions are made to Germany and Italy; Germany annexes Czechoslovakia and Memel. Hitler signs a ten year alliance with Italy and a non-aggression pact with the USSR; The IRA bombing campaign continues on mainland Britain; The Spanish Civil War ends and Britain recognises Franco's government; Japan takes Hainan and blockades the British concession at Tientsin; Italy invades Albania; King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visit America; Conscriptio and evacuation begins in Britain; Germany invades Poland, prompting Britain and France to declare war. Stalin invades Poland from the East; Russian forces invade Finland; In America, interventionist and isolationist advocates clash. The non-payment of some war-loans from the First World War and the impact of the Depression lead to an introspective mood and America maintains a neutral stance. HMS Courageous and HMS Royal Oak are sunk in the Battle of the Atlantic. Many merchant ships are also lost; The Battle of the River Plate results in the sinking of the Graf Spee; Britain and France continue to build up their military strength, awaiting a German attack ("the phoney war")

Films: *Gone With The Wind*; *Stagecoach*; *Pinnocchio*; *Ninotchka*; *The Wizard of Oz*; *Goodbye Mr Chips*; *The Four Feathers*; *Wuthering Heights*; *Beau Geste*; *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*; *Intermezzo*; *Babes in Arms*; *The Proud Valley*; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; *Shipyard Sally*; *The First Days*; *The Lion Has Wings* (one of the first war films).

Books: Full English translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*; Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley*; John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*; T S Eliot's *The Family Reunion*; C S Forester's *Captain Horatio Hornblower*.

Music: Dame Myra Hess organises lunchtime concerts at the National Gallery; Popular songs include *Over the Rainbow*, *Rollout the Barrel*, *Lili Marlene* and *Hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line*.

Other: The Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon treasure horde is discovered in Suffolk; Nylon stockings first appear; England draw 2-2 with Italy on their football tour.

10 Feb Japanese forces occupy Hainan Island, off the coast of mainland China.

15 March German forces invade Prague.

16 March Germany annexes Czechoslovakia.

31 March Anglo-French guarantee made to support Poland if attacked.

7 April Italy invades Albania

13 April British guarantee to support Romania and Greece if they are attacked.

26 April Conscription is announced in Britain, including boys aged 18-21; Sir John Simon's War Budget increases personal taxation and duties.

14 May England and Italy draw 2-2 during the English team's tour of Italy, but there are complaints the Piola fisted the ball into the net.

3 August Parliament closes for the Summer Recess and it is not proposed to be recalled before 3 October

23 August The Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact is signed between Germany and the USSR.

24 August Parliament is recalled

31 August Hitler's Big Six Council is declared to include: Goering, Hess, Keitel (Chief of Supreme Command), Dr Funk (Minister of Economic Affairs), Dr Frick (Minister of the Interior) and Dr Lammers (Chief of the Reich Chancellery)

1 Sept Germany invades Poland

2 Sept Britain delivers Germany an ultimatum of war if it does not withdraw from Poland

3 Sept Neville Chamberlain announces that, from 11.00 o'clock that morning, Britain was at war with Germany; The British declaration is followed by those of Australia, New Zealand and then France – Canada pledges co-operation; A War Cabinet is established comprising of Neville Chamberlain (PM), Sir John Simon (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Lord Halifax (Foreign Secretary), Lord Chatfield (Minister for the co-ordination of Defence), Leslie Hore-Belisha (War Minister), Sir Kingsley Wood (Air Minister), Sir Samuel Hoare (Lord Privy Seal), Lord Hankey (Minister without portfolio) and Winston Churchill (1st Lord of the Admiralty)- Anthony Eden is made Secretary to the Dominions with special access to the Cabinet; A false air raid alarm unsettles Britain; the *Athenia*, an unarmed liner carrying many American passengers, is sunk with the loss of over 300 lives.

4 Sept British cinemas are closed and sporting events and other large gatherings are banned

5 Sept RAF planes bomb the German fleet at Wilhelmshaven and Brunsbuttel at the entrance at the Kiel canal.

6 Sept President Franklin D Roosevelt declares American neutrality, expressing American friendship with Britain, Germany, France, Poland, India, Australia and New Zealand.

9 Sept British cinemas are re-opened to provide entertainment for the public and for troops on leave.

15 Sept Earl De La Warr, President of the Board of Education, reassures parents of the

virtues of evacuation .

17 Sept Russian forces invade Eastern Poland.

26 Sept Warsaw is engulfed in flames.

27 Sept Sir John Simon's War Budget raises Income Tax to 7s 6d in the pound (37.5%) and increases duties on Beer, Spirits, Wines, Tobacco and Sugar. 29 September Russia invades Estonia.

2 Oct A National Register is completed in advance of rationing.

12 Oct It is announced that 158,000 BEF troops are now in France under the command of Viscount Gort, C-in-C, and Corps Commanders Lt-Gen Sir John Dill and Lt-Gen Alan Brooke; Home Defence Battalions (Dad's Army) are formed.

18 Oct Reports of the sinking of *HMS Royal Oak* at Scapa Flow.

13 Nov The Shetland Isles suffer two air-raids

30 Nov Soviet forces invade Finland-starting the Finnish campaign

15 Dec The German pocket battleship, Graf Spee, is seriously damaged and takes refuge in Monte Video.

18 Dec The Graf Spee is scuttled in the River Plate.

19 Dec The first contingent of the Canadian army arrives in Britain

1940

Rationing starts in Britain; Germany invades Norway and Denmark; Neville Chamberlain resigns and Winston Churchill is made Prime Minister of a coalition government; German forces outflank the Maginot line and storm through Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium; The 'Deliverance' of Dunkirk – c340,000 British troops are evacuated by a myriad of small boats; Italy breaks neutrality and declares war on the Allies; Paris falls, France capitulates and Petain signs an Armistice with Hitler; The Royal Navy is forced to sink the French fleet at Oran; The air-war begins – British bombers begin night-raids on Germany and German aircraft commence the Battle of Britain with raids on British industry and air-fields; The British Government recognises and harbours the Polish, Czech and Free French governments in exile; Italian forces lay siege to Malta and advance from Abyssinia to Egypt; Japan joins the German and Italian Axis; Goering switches from air attacks on British airfields to all-night bombing raids on London (the 'Blitz'); Roosevelt sells American destroyers to Britain as the War in the Atlantic continues; Italy invades Greece. Three Italian battleships are sunk by British torpedo planes in the Battle of Taranto; Hitler shelves his invasion plans for Britain; To give some respite, Churchill orders Wavell to open the North African campaign which had initial success; President Roosevelt is re-elected for a third term, changing the tide of American opinion in favour of helping Britain's lone fight against Hitler; Stalin has Trotsky (1879-1940) assassinated in Mexico; Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) dies a broken man.

Films: *Rebecca*; *The Great Dictator*; *Fantasia*; *Citizen Kane*; *The Grapes of Wrath*; *London Can Take It*; *The Sea Hawk*; *Night Train to Munich*; *Convoy*; *Strike Up the Band*; *Broadway Melody of 1940*; *The Road to Singapore*; *The Thief of Bagdad*; *W C Fields in My Little Chickadee*; *George Formby in Let George Do It and Spare a Copper*; *The Crazy Gang in Charley's Big-Hearted Aunt and Gasbags*.

Books: Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*; Ernest Hemmingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*; Raymond Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely*.

Music: *The Last Time I Saw Paris*; *You are My Sunshine*; *When You Wish Upon a Star*;

Blueberry Hill.

Other: Jack Dempsey retires from Boxing; Churchill makes his famous "Blood, toil, tears and sweat" and "This was their finest hour" speeches; Newsprint rationing reduces the size of British papers.

6 Jan Hore-Belisha resigns as Minister of War and is replaced by Oliver Stanley.

24 Feb Churchill organises a victory parade in London for the "heroes of the sinking of the Graf Spee".

12 March The Soviet-Finnish War is ended.

31 March Finland concludes an armistice with Russia.

4 April Chamberlain makes his famous "Hitler Missed the Bus" speech in London.

9 April German forces invade Denmark and Norway. British, French and Norwegian troops resist until early June.

10 April Anglo-German naval engagements in the Skagerrak follow Germany's invasion of Denmark and Norway.

10 May Germany invades Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France (through the Ardennes). Neville Chamberlain resigns as Prime Minister and is replaced by Winston Churchill. A new Coalition War Cabinet is appointed comprising of Winston Churchill (Prime Minister and Minister for Defence/Conservative); Neville Chamberlain (Lord President of the Council/Conservative); Viscount Halifax (Foreign Secretary/Conservative) Clement Atlee (Lord Privy Seal/Labour); and Arthur Greenwood (Minister without portfolio/Labour). Non-cabinet posts include: Sir Kingsley Wood (Chancellor of the Exchequer/ Conservative); Anthony Eden (War Secretary/ Conservative); Herbert Morrison (Minister of Supply/ Labour); Sir John Simon (Lord Chancellor/Conservative); Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour/Labour); Lord Beaverbrook (Minister for Air Production/Conservative); Hugh Dalton (Minister of Economic Warfare/Labour); and Duff Cooper (Minister of Information).

13 May Churchill delivers his "Blood, toil, tears and sweat" speech to the Commons.

15 May Holland Capitulates in German Forces,

19 May The French Government place General Weygand in charge of the French forces, replacing Gamelin. Anglo- French forces engage with German blitzkrieg troops.

23 May Sir Oswald Mosley and other leading British fascists are arrested and incarcerated.

24 May Boulogne falls to German forces.

26 May Calais falls to German forces. Operation Dynamo, the British plan to evacuate forces at Dunkirk, is put into effect. Evacuation begins and continues for nine days under artillery fire and air bombardment.

28 May Belgium finally capitulates to German forces.

29 May An armada of little boats helps the larger troopships and liners to evacuate Dunkirk.

2 June The evacuation of Dunkirk is completed, rescuing 338,226 British and French soldiers.

5 June Churchill delivers "miracle of deliverance" and "we shall fight them on the beaches" speeches in the Commons.

8 June The final contingents of British troops in Narvik evacuated and Norway is occupied by

German forces.

10 June Italy declares war on Britain and France.

14 June The German army enters Paris.

17 June French premier Reynaud resigns and is succeeded by Petain.

18 June Churchill delivers "This was their finest hour" speech in the Commons.

22 June France surrenders to German forces and Petain signs armistice.

23 June De Gaulle commences broadcasts from London to France and announces the inauguration of a French National Committee. British troops mount a surprise raid on Boulogne and Le Touquet causing minimal damage, but raising morale.

3 July The British Navy forces much of the French fleet to be scuttled at Oran rather than fall to Axis forces.

10 July Officially recognised starting date for the Battle of Britain.

3 August Lord Beaverbrook joins the National War Cabinet (now six members).

7 August The Battle for Africa commences as Italian forces invade Egypt.

12 August Grouse shooting commenced in Britain.

13 August The Battle of Britain commences in earnest with Goering's Adlertag (Eagle Day) offensive.

18 August The German Luftwaffe launches the biggest raid of the Battle of Britain attacking RAF air-bases in Southern England.

22 August Trotsky dies in Mexico City after being attacked with an ice pick.

26 August RAF Bombers carry out a mass bomber raid on Berlin.

7 Sept Goering responds to British bomber attacks by re-directing Luftwaffe attacks to London and other British cities, rather than air-fields. The London Blitz commences.

12 Sept The King and Queen tour area of London devastated by the Blitz.

15 Sept The Luftwaffe mounts another massive attack, in preparation for Operation Sea Lion (the invasion of Britain), but is repulsed. The war in North Africa begins.

22 Sept Japanese occupation of Indochina begins.

3 October A further cabinet reshuffle. The eight members include: Winston Churchill (PM); Sir John Anderson (President of the Council); Herbert Morrison (Home Secretary); Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour); Sir Kingsley Wood (Chancellor of the Exchequer); Capt Oliver Lyttleton (President of the Board of Trade); and Andrew Duncan (Minister of Supply). Chamberlain stands down due to illness.

5 Oct The papers discuss the possibility of a Japanese attack on America.

31 Oct Official end-date for the Battle of Britain. German plans to invade Britain are shelved. Roosevelt extends aid to Britain.

11 Nov Neville Chamberlain dies after a prolonged illness. Russians launch an attack against Finland.

13 Nov British torpedo planes sink three Italian battleships in Taranto.

15 Nov Coventry is bombed and the cathedral is gutted.

2 Dec Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool and Southampton are blitzed.

10 Dec Morale is cheered as Wavell launches offensive in North Africa.

11 Dec British troops capture the port of Sidi Barrani.

22 Dec Viscount Halifax is made British Ambassador to America and Anthony Eden replaces him as Foreign Secretary.

1941

Morale is increased in Britain successes in North Africa. Wavell takes Benghazi and invades Abyssinia; Roosevelt signs the Lend-lease Bill, relieving British supply problems; The Luftwaffe continues to mount attacks on British cities; Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece; German forces, under Rommel, turn back the tide in North Africa. Benghazi falls; Iraqi forces join the Axis; Rudolf Hess lands in Scotland and is imprisoned; Successful German air-borne assault on Crete; The Battle of the Atlantic continues and HMS Hood is sunk. Morale is lifted by the sinking of the Bismark. Hitler surprises the world by launching the Eastern Offensive against Russia; Churchill and Roosevelt meet to sign the Atlantic Charter; British workers are encouraged to produce armaments and supplies for "our Russian allies", reversing previous anti-Stalinism; German forces take Minsk, Smolensk, Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov and approach Leningrad and Moscow; HMS Ark Royal is sunk; Counter-offensives by the British in North Africa and the Russians on the Eastern Front; Japanese forces bomb Pearl Harbour prompting American and British declarations of war against Japan. Germany and Italy declare war on America; Japanese forces sink HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse; Japan takes the Philippines and Hong Kong; Churchill visits Washington DC and Ottawa; The Manhattan Project is started as Allied and Axis scientists race to create an Atomic Bomb;

Films: *How Green Was My Valley*; *49th Parallel*; *Dumbo*; *The Maltese Falcon*; *High Sierra*; *The Sea Wolf*; *Heart of Britain*; *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*; *A Yank in the RAF (with Betty Grable)*; *Sergeant York*; *Life Begins for Andy Hardy*; *Road to Zanzibar*; *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break*; *The Crazy Gaud in The Ghost Train*.

Books: Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* (the play also opens in the West End); F Scott Fitzgerald's *Last Tycoon*; William L Shirer's *Berlin Diary*; John Masefield's *Nine Days Wonder* (of Dunkirk).

Music: Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*; William Walton's *Scapino*; Popular songs include: *Chattanooga Choo-choo*, *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered*; *I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire*; *I Got it Bad and That Ain't Good*.

Other: Death of James Joyce (1882-1941); Death of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941); First Broadcast of BBC Radio's Brains Trust.

5 Jan British forces capture Bardia in Libya.

6 Jan Amy Johnson dies in an air-crash.

10 Jan RAF bombers make a daylight raid on Northern France.

16 Jan German bombers raid Malta for the first time.

23 Jan British forces capture Tobruk.

12 March Roosevelt signs the Lease-Lend Bill to support British war efforts.

17 March De Valera declares that Ireland will not be a base of attack against Britain.

24 March Rommel successfully mounts his first attack in Libya. British vessels engaged and destroyed three Italian cruisers and a number of destroyers in a Mediterranean battle.

31 March By the end of March, Germany had achieved a monthly record of 350,000 tonnes of merchant shipping destroyed as the Battle of the Atlantic continued.

6 April German forces invade Yugoslavia and Greece.

2 May Lord Beaverbrook is made Minister of State without portfolio.

11 May German bombers cause severe damage to the Houses of Parliament.

12 May Rudolph Hess lands in Scotland, hoping to sue for peace between Britain and Germany.

20 May German forces invade Greece (the invasion is completed by 31 May)

21 May The Battle of Crete.

24 May HMS Hood is sunk in pursuit of the Bismark.

27 May The German battleship Bismark is sunk after eight days of pursuit by British forces.

28 May Roosevelt's Fireside Chat to the American people announces support for the allied convoys in the Atlantic.

1 June Clothes rationing is introduced in Britain.

2 June German forces capture Crete, forcing the evacuation of 15,000 Allied troops.

8 June British forces invade Syria.

22 June Hitler launches Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia, with fighting along a 1,000 mile front. Advances are made throughout June and July at an astonishing pace

30 June Lord Beaverbrook is made Minister of Supply, in charge of tank production.

13 July An Anglo-Soviet mutual assistance agreement is signed by Stalin and Sir Stafford Cripps in Moscow.

19 July German Army Group Centre reaches Smolensk, 200 miles from Moscow.

20 July Britain broadcasts the Victory-V symbol and the opening of Beethoven's 3rd symphony as a signal of defiance and resistance.

24 July Japanese forces take Indo-China (granted by Petain).

25 July Conscription in Britain is extended to all men aged between 18 and 46 and all women aged up to 31.

12 August Churchill and Roosevelt meet at sea and sign the Atlantic Charter, pledging to preserve world freedom and to treat victor and vanquished alike after the war.

19 August German forces capture c650,000 Russian soldiers outside Kiev.

21 August On the Russian front Hitler directs his troops to attack Leningrad and then South

rather than Moscow.

23 August The Battle of Leningrad commences with battles in the suburbs.

25 August British, Indian and Russian troops invade Iran.

1 Sept German troops mount the first artillery bombardment of Leningrad.

6 Sept Hitler re-directs his forces in Russian to attack Moscow.

20 Sept German forces occupy Kiev.

28 Sept First Arctic convoys leaves from Iceland to Russia.

12 Oct Stalin transfers the Russian government to Kuibyshev.

14 Oct German forces seize Kalinin, just north west of Moscow.

30 Oct Pikes are issued to British home guard units.

3 Nov Hard frosts in Russia slow the advance of German forces.

15 Nov HMS Ark Royal, an aircraft carrier, is sunk in the Mediterranean

18 Nov The British 8th Army launched its second campaign in North Africa.

20 Nov British forces invade Libya under the command of Sir Claude Auchinleck.

2 Dec A handful of German patrols enter the suburbs of Moscow—the furthest point reached by German forces in Russia. Newspapers warn of impending Japanese offensive.

4 Dec German bombers commence a five month systematic bombing campaign against Malta—Britain's Mediterranean base for attacking Axis convoys.

5 Dec The Russian counter-offensive begins, driving German forces back from Moscow.

7 Dec Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbour, take Shanghai and occupy Wake Island, prompting America to enter the war.

8 Dec The Allied forces (excepting Russia) declare war on Japan. America declares war on Germany and Italy. Japanese forces capture Wake Island.

10 Dec HMS Prince of Wales, a battleship, and HMS Repulse, a cruiser, are sunk by Japanese forces.

11 Dec German and Italy declare war on the United States of America.

18 Dec Hitler assumes command of German forces in Russia.

22 Dec Churchill meets with Roosevelt in Washington.

25 Dec Hong Kong surrenders to Japanese forces after 17 days of resistance.

27 Dec Churchill addresses the U S Congress.

1942

Japanese forces take the Dutch east Indies, Kuala Lumpur, Burma, Singapore, Java and Rangoon; British commandos raid St Nazaire and the RAF mounts the first 1,000 bombers raid on Cologne; American GI's begin to arrive in Britain; Rommel sweeps back the British

counter-offensive in North Africa and captures Tobruk; The battles of the Coral Sea and Midway effectively cripple the Japanese Navy and turn the tide in the Pacific War—Tokyo is bombed; German forces re-take Kharkov and advance all along the Eastern Front. The Battle of Stalingrad commences; HMS Manchester and HMS Eagle are both sunk; Montgomery is appointed Commander of the Eighth Army in North Africa and defeats Rommel at El Alamein. With American support he drives Rommel out of Tobruk and Benghazi; The remains of the French Navy are scuttled at Toulon; British and Commonwealth forces advance on Burma; Albert Speer is made German Armaments Minister; Millions of Jews are murdered in German gas chambers.

Films; *The Magnificent Ambersons*; *Bambi*; *Mrs Miniver*; *In Which We Serve*; *Coastal Command*; *Listen to Britain*; *The Young Mr Pitt*; *Across the Pacific*; *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon*; *Yankee Doodle Dandy*; *Road to Morocco*; *The Goose Steps out with Will Hay*.

Books: Terence Rattigan's *Flare Path*; Elliot Paul's *The Last Time I Saw Paris*; T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*; Trevelyan's *English Social History*.

Music: Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*; Popular songs include: *The White Cliffs of Dover*; *Paper Doll*; *That Old Black Magic*; *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition*; *Sleepy Lagoon*; *Be Careful, It's My Heart*.

Other: Malta is awarded the George Cross for bravery; William Beveridge issues his Report on Social Security; ITMA becomes BBC Radio's most popular show.

1 Jan "United Nations" resolve not to make a separate peace with Axis forces. The first train sets out from Tikhvin to Voibokala, to relieve the siege of Leningrad.

2 Jan Introduction of the Avro Lancaster to British bombers- squadrons, together with increasing numbers of American Flying Fortresses.

19 Jan Carole Lombard, Hollywood actress, dies in a plane crash.

20 Jan The Wannsee Conference proposes extermination as the Final Solution to the "Jewish Problem".

24 Jan Japanese forces land in New Guinea.

26 Jan Large quantities of American troops begin to arrive in Northern Ireland.

31 Jan The siege of Singapore begins.

8 Feb Japanese forces take Rangoon, capital of Burma.

12 Feb German battleships *Gneisnau* and *Scharnhorst* and cruiser *Prinz Eugen* run the gauntlet from Brest to Germany and come under heavy fire.

15 Feb The Fall of Singapore to Japanese forces.

19 Feb Japanese aircraft bomb Darwin in northern Australia.

27 Feb The battle of the Java sea—Japanese forces defeat an allied fleet enabling the conquest of Java by 9 March.

18 March General MacArthur appointed head of Allied forces in the Pacific.

5 April Japanese forces attack Colombo.

15 April George VI awards the George Cross to the Island Malta.

18 April US B-25 bombers bomb Tokyo (the "Doolittle raid").

23 April German bombers commence 'Baedeker' raids on English cathedral cities.

3 May Japanese forces take Mandalay.

4 May The Battle of the Coral Sea commences, lasting five days, and thwarts Japanese attempts to invade Australia.

31 May The RAF launches a 1000 bomber raid on Cologne, in reprisal for the Baedeker raids: Essen, Lubeck and Rostock follow

4 June The Battle of Midway turns the tide of the war in the Pacific three Japanese carriers are sunk greatly reducing the possibility of air cover for Japanese land and sea forces. The *USS Yorktown* is crippled and sunk two days later

17 June Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Washington.

21 June Rommel leads the Axis forces into Tobruk.

24 June The British Government announces a ban on ice-cream after 30 September.

25 June Major-General Dwight D Eisenhower is appointed Commander-in-Chief of US forces in Europe and establishes a base in London.

28 June Hitler directs a German counter-offensive against Russia.

2 July Rommel leads Axis forces to victory in the First Battle of El Alamein.

23 July German forces capture Rostov.

2 August Operation Pedestal is mounted by the British Navy to get supplies to Malta.

7 August American marines land at Guadalcanal aiming to destroy a newly built Japanese long-range bombing base. The battle lasts six months.

8 August US Naval support is forced to abandon the marines at Guadalcanal.

18 August Alexander replaces Auchinleck at the head of the British forces in the Middle-East and Montgomery is given command of the Eighth Army.

19 August Canadian and British forces lead an Allied raid on Dieppe, but are repulsed with heavy losses.

24 August Sea battles near Guadalcanal result in the loss of a Japanese aircraft-carrier and destroyer.

25 August The German counter-offensive on the Eastern front brings them close to Stalingrad. The Siege of Stalingrad, lasting 3 months, commences.

12 Sept 3000 fresh Japanese troops make repeated attempts to remove the 700 American marines stranded on Guadalcanal, but suffer heavy casualties and fail (the Battle of Bloody Ridge).

13 Sept The First Battle of Stalingrad commences.

18 Sept Supply convoys reinforce the American marines on Guadalcanal.

21 Sept The allied offensive in Burma begins.

23 Oct Gen Montgomery leads the British Eighth Army against the German Afrika Korps in the 2nd Battle of El Alamein. The battle lasts for twelve days and brings the allies decisive victory in North Africa.

24 Oct Japanese repeat attacks on US forces at Guadalacanal, but are now outnumbered and suffer severe losses.

25 Oct Rommel is sent back to El Alamein from hospital in Germany.

4 Nov The Battle of El Alamein is effectively over and is an emphatic allied victory.

8 Nov Anglo-American landings in Morocco begin (Operation Torch)

10 Nov Churchill delivers "the end of the beginning" speech at Mansion House.

19 Nov The Siege of Stalingrad is partially lifted by a new Russian offensive.

27 Nov The French fleet is scuttled at Toulon to prevent it falling into Nazi hands.

30 Nov The Siege of Malta is lifted.

1 Dec The Beveridge Report is issued, recommending the provision of social services in post-war Britain.

12 Dec Manstein attempts to relieve the German Sixth Army, stranded in Stalingrad.

21 Dec Manstein's forces are driven back.

1943

German forces withdraw from the Caucasus; Churchill and Roosevelt meet at Casablanca; American forces win Battle of Guadalacanal; Montgomery and the Eighth Army capture Tripoli; Field-Marshal Paulus surrenders as Russian forces eventually win the Battle of Stalingrad. Germans withdraw along the Eastern Front; RAF bombers mount increasingly heavy raids on Germany; Eisenhower assumes overall command of Allied Forces in North Africa and presides over the German capitulation in Tunisia; RAF "Dambusters" raid on the Ruhr dams; The RAF Pathfinder force destroys the rocket research station at Peenemunde on the Baltic; American forces win the Battle of the Bismark Sea and recapture the Aleutian Islands; The Allied invasion of Italy commences with the invasion of Sicily. Palermo, Messina and Naples soon fall, Mussolini is dismissed, and Italy accepts unconditional surrender. American bombers set light to the Rumanian oil fields; Allied summits are held at Quebec, Cairo (with Chiang Kai-Shek) and Tehran; Orde Wingate leads Chindit raiders behind Japanese lines; Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten placed in charge of Allied South-East Asia command; Allied saturation bombing of Germany commences.

Films: *Casablanca*; *Jane Eyre*; *Desert Victory*; *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*; *Millions Like Us*; *The Gentle Sex*; *This is the Army*; *Action in the North Atlantic*; *Star Spangled Rhythm*; *Bataan*; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; *San Demetrio, London*; *The Outlaw (with Jane Russell)*; *Girl Crazy*; *A Canterbury Tale*; *Stage Door Canteen*.

Books: Nowel Coward's *This Happy Breed*; Ernie Pyle's *Here Is Your War*; James Thurber's *Men, Women and Dogs*; Upton Sinclair's *Dragon's Teeth*

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Symphony No 5 in D*; Popular Songs included: *Mairzy Doats*; *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*; *Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer*; *People Will Say We're in Love*.

Other: Penicillin introduced; Jitterbugging craze starts.

12 Jan Roosevelt and Churchill meet in Casablanca, North Africa.

26 Jan British and New Zealand forces capture Tripoli.

31 Jan The German Sixth Army under Field Marshall Paulus surrenders to the Russians at Stalingrad. Over 150,000 German troops had been lost and nearly 1,000,000 captured.

2 Feb Russian forces overrun the final German pockets of resistance in Stalingrad.

8 Feb Japanese troops evacuate Guadalcanal. Orde Wingate's Chindit Raiders begin infiltrating Burma.

20 March Rommel's Afrika Korps are confronted in the Battle of the Mareth Line in Tunisia.

28 March Berlin is bombed heavily.

20 April Churchill relieves the restraining order preventing the ringing of Church Bells.

7 May Tunis and Bizerta fall to Allied forces.

11 May Roosevelt and Churchill meet in Washington.

13 May Axis forces in North Africa capitulate.

17 May A team of specially adapted RAF Lancaster bombers breach the Möhne and Eder dams, flooding the Ruhr valley, disrupting electric power stations and depriving factories of water supplies.

21 May Reports emerge concerning the guerilla tactics of Orde Wingate's Chindit Raiders in Burma.

18 June Field-Marshal Wavell is appointed Viceroy of India.

5 July Hitler launches operation Citadel, attempting to encircle the Russian forces around Kursk. General Sikorski, Polish Prime Minister and Commander in Charge is killed in an air-crash near Gibraltar.

10 July The Allied invasion of Sicily begins.

12 July Marshal Zhukov commences the Russian counter-attack at Kursk; 600 German and 850 Russian command vehicles engage at Prokhorovka and 600 are destroyed.

19 July The first daylight bombing raid of Rome is completed.

23 July Allied forces capture the port of Palermo in Sicily.

25 July Mussolini resigns and King Victor Emmanuel assumes command of the Italian Armed Forces with Marshal Badoglio as his Prime Minister. Hitler abandons Operation Citadel and the Kursk offensive.

11 August Roosevelt and Churchill meet in Quebec.

17 August The Allied invasion of Sicily is completed after 39 days.

23 August Russian forces take Kharkov.

3 Sep Allied forces invade the Italian mainland.

8 Sep Italy surrenders and German forces occupy Rome. Italian forces pledge to oppose German forces.

13 Sep Allied and Axis armoured forces clash at Salerno.

25 Sep Russian forces re-capture Smolensk.

11 Oct British midget submarines damage the German battleship *Tirpitz* at its mooring in Norway

18 Oct The Foreign Ministers of Russia, the United States of America and Britain (Molotov, Hull and Eden) meet in Moscow.

1 Nov American Marines capture Bougainville in the South Pacific.

6 Nov Russian forces recapture Kiev.

23 Nov Berlin is subjected to its heaviest bombing raid.

27 Nov Churchill, Roosevelt and Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-Shek) meet at Cairo and issue the Pacific Charter stating that Japan will be stripped of all islands taken or occupied since 1914 and pledging the independence of Korea.

28 Nov Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin meet in Tehran.

27 Dec The German battleship *Scharnhorst* is sunk whilst attacking a Russia-bound convoy. Air Chief Marshal Tedder is appointed Deputy Supreme Commander under General Eisenhower for the British and American expeditionary force.

1944

The Fall of German-occupied Italy is complete as Allied forces land at Nettuno and Anzio, Monte Cassino falls and Rome is taken; American forces continue their irresistible advance across the Pacific. The Solomon and Marshall Islands fall, but fierce defence by Japanese forces causes heavy casualties; German V1 and V2 attacks on London supplement heavy bombing raids; Russian forces relieve Leningrad and Sebastopol; Saturation bombing of Germany continues; D-Day landings secure an Allied foothold in Normandy; Japanese troops launch an offensive into India and British forces at Kohima and Imphal are besieged; American troops re-capture Saigon; Failed assassination attempt against Hitler; The fall of Saipan precipitates the downfall of the Tojo cabinet in Japan; The Russians take Brest-Litovsk and there is a popular uprising in Warsaw; American forces take Guam; Further major Allied conferences are held at Dumbarton Oaks, Quebec and Moscow; The Allied forces push through France enabling de Gaulle to enter Paris. American forces cross the German frontier near Trier. British parachute troops land at Eindhoven and Arnhem; Black-out restrictions are loosened in London; American troops regain the Philippines. The Battle of Leyte Gulf further weakens the Japanese forces; Russian troops join Yugoslav irregulars in taking Belgrade. Russian forces capture Hungary; Roosevelt is elected for a fourth Term as President; Erwin Rommel (1897-1944) dies; The German counter-offensive in the Ardennes ("the Battle of the Bulge") commences.

Films: *Henry V*; *Going My Way*; *To Have and to Have Not*; *This Happy Breed*; *Hollywood Canteen*; *Road to Utopia*; *Cover Girl* (with Rita Hayworth); *Up in Arms* (with Danny Kaye); *Meet Me in St Lois*; *Follow the Boys*.

Books: H E Bates' *Fair Stood the Wind for France*; W Somerset Maugham's *The Razor Edge*; Terence Rattigan's *Love in Idleness*; Mazo de la Roche's *Jalna*.

Music: Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*; Leonard Bernstein's *On the Town*; Popular Song included: *Swinging on a Star*; *Accentuate the Positive*; *Sentimental Journey*.

Other: Death of Henry Wood (1869-1944), Proms conductor.

4 Jan General Montgomery bids an emotional farewell to the Eighth Army in Italy as he leaves for London to become Commander in Charge of the British armies under General

Eisenhower.

6 Jan Russian forces re-invade Poland, driving back the German army.

7 Jan The RAF announces the development of the Gloster Whittle the first jet propelled plane, named after it's inventor Frank Whittle.

12 Jan Count Ciano and other leading fascists are executed in German occupied Rome.

22 Jan Allied forces land south of Anzio.

25 Jan Allied forces make a head-on assault on the German fortifications at Monte Cassino, but meet fierce resistance.

28 Jan Anglo-American declarations further deprecate Japanese brutality to prisoners of war.

11 Feb After fifteen days of fighting, Allied troops are beaten back from Monte Cassino, and receive hostile criticism.

15 Feb Allied bombers drop c450 tons of explosive on the monastery at Monte Cassino, and receive hostile criticism.

16 Feb A fresh allied assault on Monte Cassino, is lead by Indian and New Zealander troops, but meets stiff opposition and halts in poor weather.

17 Feb It was announced in the House of Commons that a free National Health Service would be established in Britain after the war.

18 Feb American forces destroy the Japanese base at Truk.

4 March The RAF launches a massive bombing raid on Hamburg, utilising new 12,000 lb bombs.

6 March Japanese forces launch Operation U-GO, attempting to capture the British air-base at supply point at Imphal in Burma.

15 March Monte Cassino is heavily bombed again.

23 March Allied assaults on Monte Cassino are repelled again.

24 March Major-General Order Wingate is killed in an air crash.

5 April Japanese forces launch an assault on Kohima, whilst nearby Imphal is still under seige.

16 April Russian forces enter the Crimea.

17 April Japanese forces mount a final attack on the Allied forces in Kohima who are left defending an area 350 yards square.

18 April Allied forces in Kohima are relieved by the British 2nd Division.

21 April Princess Elizabeth celebrates her 18th birthday.

22 April American troops make unopposed landings in Dutch New Guinea.

2 May The first pre-fabricated house (the "pre-fab") is unveiled in London.

4 May Allied troops recapture Arakan in Southern Burma.

5 May Allied Forces lead a counter-offensive at Kohima.

9 May Russian forces re-capture Sebastopol.

11 May General Alexander, Commander in Charge of Allied forces in Italy, launches a final, massive attack on Monte Cassino.

18 May Polish troops finally capture the Monastery at Monte Cassino

31 May The Japanese withdraw from Kohima after sustaining heavy losses.

3 June The Battle of Kohima is finally ended as resisting troops are captured and killed.

4 June Allied troops enter Rome which the German troops withdraw from to avoid its' destruction (and because it is an untenable defensive position).

5 June D-Day is postponed due to poor weather.

6 June D-Day. Allied forces land in Normandy after a disinformation campaign suggesting an invasion at Calais. Over 150,000 troops are landed in a day.

13 June Germany launches the first V-1 rocket against London, repeating earlier attacks on civilian targets. Over 2,000 are launched before the end of the war.

18 June Allied forces surround the port of Cherbourg.

22 June The Siege of Imphal is relieved, marking the turning point of the land war in Asia.

3 July Russian forces re-capture Minsk.

4 July Japanese forces are driven back from Imphal.

9 July Allied forces capture Caen.

17 July Rommel is seriously injured when his staff car is strafed.

18 July General Montgomery launches an offensive to Falaise, but has limited success and loses over 400 tanks.

20 July Hitler survives an assassination attempt by Colonel Count von Stauffenberg and other disillusioned German military commanders.

21 July US marines land on Guam.

1 August Patriots in Warsaw begin an uprising against the German occupation forces.

15 August Allied forces land in the South of France from Nice to Marseilles.

22 August 50,000 German troops are captured as Patton's 3rd Army encircles units defending in Normandy. French resistance units take Versailles.

23 August Paris is liberated and General de Gaulle establishes a provisional government. Marseilles is liberated in the South.

25 August De Gaulle enters Paris.

31 August Russian forces capture Bucharest in Rumania.

3 Sept Allied forces re-take Brussels as the German forces continue to retreat rapidly

10 Sept Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Quebec.

11 Sept Allied troops enter German soil at the Luxembourg border, but soon meet with stiff resistance at the Rhine.

17 Sept Operation Market Garden is launched with air-borne troops landing near Arnhem, Nijmegen and Eindhoven, and the British 2nd Army pushing up “ Hell’s Highway” in an attempt to link up with them and thus secure a Rhine crossing.

19 Sept Lt-Col John Frost’s paratroops are finally overrun at the Bridge at Arnhem, but their defence enables allied forces to capture the Bridge at Nijmegen.

25 Sept The remaining allied paratroops are forced to withdraw from their positions to the North of the Rhine.

3 Oct The liberation of Greece begins.

15 Oct Rommel is announced to be dead by the German News Agency.

17 Oct The Battle of Leyte Gulf commences, which effectively destroys the remainder of the Japanese fleet.

20 Oct American forces recapture the Philippines.

11 Nov Churchill admits in Parliament that German V-2 terror weapons have been falling on British soil for several weeks.

13 Nov The German battleship *Tirpitz* is sunk by RAF bombing raids, using the 12,000 lb Earthquake bomb designed by Barnes- Wallis.

20 Nov Black-out restrictions are lifted in London: Piccadilly, the Strand and Fleet Street are relit.

4 Dec The Home-Guard (or “Dad’s Army) is disbanded.

16 Dec Von Runstedt mount a surprise counter-offensive in the Ardennes commencing the Battle of the Bulge. Bad weather prevents allied air-support.

17 Dec Over 100 American troops are massacred at Malmedy by German troops after having been captured

20 Dec German forces encircle Bastogne, headquarters of the US 8th Army. The Allied counter –attack begins.

26 Dec Bastogne is relieved after fierce fighting: 450 German tanks are destroyed.

27 Dec Hitler consents to a withdrawal of German forces from the offensive.

1945

Russian forces drive Germany out of Poland; Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin meet at Yalta; British bombing raid on Dresden; Russian forces take Hungary; American forces take Manila and Ikinawa, but still face fierce resistance; The British 2nd Army crosses the Rhine; Death of Franklin D Roosevelt (1882-1945) - Vice President Harry Truman is made President; Russian and American troops meet at Torgau; German forces are defeated in Northern Italy. Mussolini is hanged by Italian partisans; Facing defeat on 3 fronts, Hitler commits suicide; The Russians take Berlin; V E Day marks the end of the war in Europe (8 May); The newly formed United Nations presides over the division of Germany into four zones. Conference at Potsdam; The British Labour Party is elected with a huge majority. Churchill is ousted as Prime Minister, to be replaced by Atlee; Japan reguges to accept unconditional surrender. America drops atomic

bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; V J Day marks the end of the war in the Pacific (15 August); Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam to be an independent republic; The Arab League opposes the creation of a Jewish State; Tito declares Yugoslavia to be a Federal republic; Recriminations (executions of Laval, Quisling, etc.) and War Trials commence; The World Bank is created and Reconstruction begins.

Films: *Brief Encounter*; *Blithe Spirit*; *The Way to the Stars*; *Anchors' Aweigh*; *Burma Victory*; *The True Glory*; *The Story of G I Joe*.

Books: Britten's *Peter Grimes*; Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*; Bebop becomes popular.

Other: Rationing continues in Britain; the Labour Party introduces Family Allowances and other Welfare State legislation.

1 Jan Hitler broadcasts a speech declaring that the war will not end before 1976.

10 Jan "The Bulge" in the Western front is steadily eliminated.

17 Jan Warsaw is captured by Russian forces.

19 Jan Tensions arise in Poland as many see the Russians as a new occupying force.

24 Jan Mandalay, the capital of Burma, is surrounded.

9 Feb British and Canadian forces reach the Rhine.

11 Feb Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin complete eight days of talks in Yalta, in which German surrender terms, the post-war partition of Germany, and the democratic government of Poland are agreed. The formation of the United Nations is also agreed.

13 Feb Russian forces capture Budapest.

14 Feb Allied bombers carry out a saturation bombing raid on the historic city of Dresden, which was perceived as a major supply centre fortifying German forces on the Eastern front, and a railway communication centre.

8 March American forces cross the Rhine at Remagen.

14 March The RAF drops new 22,000 lb bombs on railway lines in Bielefeld.

16 March American forces capture Iwo Jima after overcoming fanatical resistance.

18 March The Milk Ration is increased in Britain.

28 March Colonel-General, Heinz Guderian, Chief of German General Staff, is dismissed for suggesting that peace negotiations should be entered into.

1 April American forces land at Okinawa, only 370 miles from the Japanese mainland, virtually unopposed.

3 April The 82 day Battle of Okinawa commences.

5 April British forces capture Osnabruck.

7 April The Japanese battleship *Yamamoto* and four destroyers are sunk in the last naval action of World War.

12 April President Franklin D Roosevelt dies of a cerebral haemorrhage. Vice President Harry S Truman assumes the presidency.

13 April Russian forces capture Vienna.

15 April American troops cross the Elbe, 50 miles West of Berlin but are halted by Eisenhower.

16 April Allied armies liberate Belsen and discover, as at Nordhausen and Buchenwald, evidence of a scale of atrocity scarcely imaginable. Russian forces mount a 10,000 gun barrage of German troops East of Seelow, as they prepared to race to Berlin.

20 April Russian Artillery begins to bombard Berlin.

25 April Russian and American forces meet at Torgau on the Elbe.

26 April Russian forces encircle Berlin.

28 April Mussolini is murdered and hanged by his feet in Milan.

29 April Only pockets of resistance remain to oppose the Russian troops in Berlin.

30 April Russian troops are twice repulsed from the Reichstag. Hitler commits suicide in his bunker. Goebbels is appointed his successor but also commits suicide. Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz is appointed in his stead.

1 May The Reichstag is finally captured by Russian troops.

4 May Field-Marshal Montgomery accepts the surrender of German forces in North-West Germany, Holland and Denmark at Luneburg Heath.

7 May General Jodl signs the declaration of unconditional surrender for the German forces at Eisenhower's HQ in Rheims.

8 May V E Day. The end of the war in Europe.

24 May Himmler commits suicide whilst in captivity.

29 May American bombers blitz Yokohama. "Lord Haw-Haw" (alias William Joyce) is captured.

21 June Lieutenant-General Ushijima, Japanese commander on Okinawa, commits ritual suicide as Okinawa falls after 82 days of fierce resistance.

26 June The United Nations Charter is signed.

26 July The General Election in Britain results in a Labour landslide. The Labour Party receives 393 seats, a figure it has never bettered. The Conservatives hold 213 seats, the Liberals 12 and others 22. Clement Atlee replaces Churchill as Prime Minister, with Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary); Hugh Dalton (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Stafford Cripps (President of the Board of Trade), Aneurin Bevan (Minister of Health) and Herbert Morrison (leader of the House) is supporting roles.

27 July Churchill's final act as war-time Prime Minister was to sign the ultimatum issued to the Japanese government on this day.

2 August Atlee, Truman, Stalin and De Gaulle meet at Potsdam where war trials and reparations are agreed. Japanese surrender terms are drawn up.

6 August The first atomic bomb is dropped by an American bomber on Hiroshima: 80,600 people are killed instantly, but no surrender is forthcoming.

9 August Russian declares war on Japan and races to seize the Kuril islands. A second atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki.

14 August Japan accepts unconditional surrender.

15 August V J Day. The war is ended.

3 Sept The Japanese formally surrender on board US battleship *Missouri* anchored off Tokyo, exactly seven years after the German invasion of Poland.

1 Nov The planned date for the invasion of mainland Japan.