

# CROYDON COURAGEOUS

by Norman Partridge, 1946

Norman Partridge was born in Thornton Heath in 1921. He studied at the Croydon Art School and during the Second World War Partridge served in the army for two years before being discharged with rheumatism.

In his spare time, Partridge worked on his own paintings which included painting *Croydon Courageous*. The work is based on rough sketches of bomb sites around Croydon and the finished painting is a montage of several locations. This painting also reflects the different roles in the war effort from Air Raid Wardens, Ambulance, Stretcher Party to YMCA volunteers [see key below].

Partridge produced six sketches of groups of figures and gave each group a separate location of ruined houses and then assembled these groups to make one composition. We do not know where all the sites are but the ruins in the background of the picture could possibly be based on the bomb site at number 75 Brigstock Road. Formerly a double fronted large Victorian house which belonged to Partridge's friends Mr and Mrs Longhurst, a V-1 flying bomb (commonly known as a Doodlebug) demolished the house. This was likely sometime between June and August 1944 when almost 10,000 V-1s were launched towards England, sometimes at a rate of nearly 100 a day. The church in the centre of the picture at the rear, was possibly modelled on a church at Selhurst or Norbury. The chapel type building on the top right side is likely based on the Old Tabernacle at Selhurst.

Croydon Council minutes of 1946: *This work, first exhibited in November 1946 conveys an impression of sections of the population of Croydon and the services immediately after the bombing; no particular incident from the many is commemorated, neither is any actual person portrayed, but the artist had a number of well known local characters in mind when grouping the figures. Mr Partridge began working on the picture more than three years ago, but had to abandon it twice owing to enemy action on the town. The design for the canvas formed one of the drawings that won for the artist the American Edward Austin Abbey Scholarship for mural painting.*

## Key

- 1 — British Ambulance personnel
- 2 — The Women's Land Army
- 3 — Royal Navy
- 4 — London Fire Brigade
- 5 — Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), possibly Military Police
- 6 — First Aid Party
- 7 — Metropolitan Police
- 8 — National Fire Service
- 9 — Air Raid Warden
- 10 — Possibly First Aid Party
- 11 — Civil Defence Stretcher Party
- 12 — Police Special Constable
- 13 — Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)
- 14 — British Army
- 15 — Home Guard
- 16 — Fire Watchers
- 17 — YMCA Mobile Canteen

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# VE AND VJ DAY 1945 IN CROYDON



VE Day street party Landsdowne Road, Purley, 1945



Young residents of Ely Road, Selhurst, celebrate VE Day 1945

Text: Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society  
Images: Courtesy of Croydon Archives. 1) PH-07-199  
rightsholder unknown 2) PH-03-374 rightsholder  
unknown 3) PH-01-3543 published in Croydon Times  
and Surrey County Mail on 12 May 1945.

Known as Victory in Europe (VE) Day, the Second World War came to an end in Europe on the 8th May 1945, and was marked by two national holidays. Croydon was decorated with red, white and blue pennants and rosettes. The Town Hall and The Queen's Gardens became the centre of celebrations. Lights illuminated the area, bands played, and at 3pm crowds listened on loudspeakers to Prime Minister Winston Churchill announcing a ceasefire throughout Europe.

For the rest of that day there was music and bonfires. Kennards department store on North End displayed a huge plaster statue of peace, named 'The Dawn of a New World'. Towards midnight, pink and yellow lamps floodlit the statue, under which people danced until 2am. Many communities held street parties to celebrate and this tradition continues today along with services of remembrance and the lighting of beacons.

War continued in the Asia-Pacific region until the 14th August, when the Japanese government accepted the Allied surrender terms. Two more national holidays were declared, with the 15th August becoming known as Victory in Japan (VJ) Day. Stores including Allders were decorated with flags, and again there was music all over town and broadcasts from the Town Hall. After the King's 9pm speech the singing and dancing continued until midnight at Fairfield (then a car park). There were bonfires at Duppas Hill, Addington Hills, New Addington and elsewhere that continued through the night.

Visit: [www.museumofcroydon.com/victory-day](http://www.museumofcroydon.com/victory-day)  
for more information or scan the QR code







Thanksgiving service, Croydon Town Hall, 8 May 1945



# CROYDON IN WORLD WAR II 1939-1945



Bomb damage to houses in Moffat Road, Thornton Heath.



When World War II began in September 1939 life for people in Croydon changed drastically. Plans put in place to prevent aerial bombing included a blackout, where no house lights could show outside and streetlights remained switched off, making it difficult to move around after dark. Rationing of some goods including sugar, meat and cheese began, and shortages increased as the war continued.

Croydon had a significant role in the War. Croydon Airport became RAF Croydon, which along with RAF Kenley, played an important part in the Battle of Britain. The airport, and the many factories surrounding it, were frequent targets for bombing and consequently Croydon suffered a great deal of damage.

The bombing of London, known as 'The Blitz', began in August 1940. In the months that followed many Croydon houses were destroyed and children were evacuated to the countryside from East Croydon Station, for their safety. From 1944 V-1 flying bombs known as 'Doodlebugs' started to fall on London,

they were particularly frightening as you could not predict where the bomb would fall. These were followed by devastating V-2 bombs, the first falling in South Norwood in October 1944.

Communities worked to support those who were injured or those whose homes were badly damaged or destroyed. Neighbours pulled together, and support was on hand from those working or volunteering in roles such as Air Raid Wardens or for the emergency services. There were also mobile canteens and Rest Centres for those who lost their homes.

Visit [www.historiccroydonairport.org.uk](http://www.historiccroydonairport.org.uk) and [www.kenleyrevival.org](http://www.kenleyrevival.org) for more information.

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1) PH-00-636, 2) PH-00-635.