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NEWBURY NEWS



A plaque installed by Thatcham Town Council to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day

Reflecting after war in the East

People with family connections invited to share at VJ Day event

By BETHANY SIRIANNI
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AN event asking 'Revenge or reconciliation: After war, what next?' will act as a "comradely reflective discussion" in commemoration of VJ Day.

The event will be held on Monday, August 11, at the Royal British Legion in Newbury, from 2pm.

August 15 marks 80 years on from victory over Japan, the official end of the Second World War; VE Day marks the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Despite widespread celebrations for VE Day, tens of thousands of Allied troops were still engaged in battle in the Far East, with hundreds of thousands more incarcerated in prisoner of war camps, up until the official surrender of Japan.

The event, which recognises these conflicts, has been organised by Tony Vickers, the current chairman of West Berkshire Council and son of the youngest brigadier to survive the Burma Campaign, as acting commander 33rd Indian Infantry Brigade, Brig JS Vickers, ex 10GR.

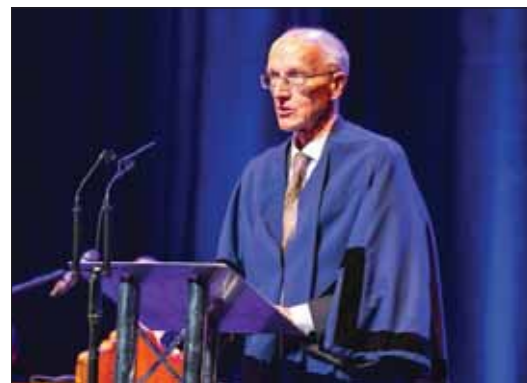
Aged 22, in 1923, JS Vickers went to join the Indian Army, where he stayed for his military career, during which time he fell in love, eloping secretly with two strangers as witnesses, and the couple went on to have three children.

In 1945, he leapt up two ranks from acting lieutenant colonel to commanding officer of the 33rd Indian Infantry Brigade in Burma, making him the youngest brigadier, aged 34, due to a significant number of deaths throughout the conflict that rendered him the most proficient for the role.

He fought alongside the 'forgotten army' as they tried to free Burma of Japanese invasion, leading to the allied recapture of Burma in 1945.

Building a reputation as a skilled tactician and working hard to improve the welfare of soldiers through improved housing and other initiatives, JS Vickers was well-respected.

Having learned of his family history through his own experiences in the Far East, as well as later research, Mr Vickers hopes to create conversation



West Berkshire Council chairman Tony Vickers

through other families' stories.

Speaking to *Newburytoday*, Mr Vickers described the Treaty of Versailles as "a half-time break in the middle of a long war, where the treaty did nothing to promote reconciliation and create democracy".

With the finality of the Second World War came a renewed understanding of the steps needed to create world cohesion and so, where the Treaty of Versailles promoted

The discussion, which Mr Vickers hopes will educate and promote conversation about the importance of reconciliation and the experiences of others during the conflict, will be led by his son, Prof Edward Vickers

revenge for the First World War, reconciliation seemed to pave a better path forward at the end of the Second World War.

The discussion, which Mr Vickers hopes will educate and promote conversation about the importance of reconciliation and the experiences of others during the conflict, will be led by his son, Prof Edward Vickers.

Edward Vickers is currently

UNESCO chairman on education for peace, social justice and global citizenship at Kyushu State University, Japan.

Graduating from Oxford in 1992, Edward followed his father to Hong Kong, where Tony had been posted as chief geographic officer.

Tony had belatedly followed in his own father's footsteps, was commissioned into the Royal Engineers aged 28 and trained at Denison Barracks in Hermitage to be a military surveyor in 1980, which afforded him several overseas postings.

Edward Vickers went on to complete a PhD on the ways in which historical education is used as a political tool to create national identity – firstly in Hong Kong, then across Asia, leading to his current position and understanding of this time period.

Former Japanese government minister Yukihisa Fujita, chairman of the International IC (Initiatives of Change) Association of Japan, will also lead the discussion.

Finally, it will be chaired by Bernard Clark, author of *Nagasaki* and former BBC documentary maker, who lives locally.

Mr Vickers hopes local people with a family connection to the Second World War in Asia/Pacific will attend and share.

Anyone from the local community is welcome to join the discussion.

To register interest, email chairman@westberks.gov.uk