

# Chelsea Pensioner - the face of the Lamp Light of Peace



Colin Thackery became an overnight singing star and a national treasure when at 89 he was the oldest person ever to win the popular TV show *Britain's Got Talent*. Korean War veteran Sergeant Major Thackery has been chosen to be the face of the D-Day Lamp Light of Peace. Hundreds of lamps are being lit throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, UK Overseas Territories and on the five beaches in Normandy, France, landed on by American, British, and Canadian troops and others on June 6, 1944.

Eighty years on, the lamps will be lit at 9.15pm to coincide with the lighting of the beacons that night, with the flames from both representing the 'light of peace' that emerged from the dreadful darkness of war.

A Chelsea Pensioner, about to celebrate his 94th birthday, Colin is also an Ambassador for the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity and the War Horse Memorial.

He says, "For me to be asked to play my own small part in the commemorations to mark 80 years since the D-Day landings, where so many sacrifices were made to help secure the freedom we all enjoy today, fills me with pride and humility.

"History tells us that World War II was the largest and deadliest conflict in human history, involving more than 50 nations. It was fought on land, sea, and air in nearly every part of the world. It took the lives of more than 60 million people and injured tens of millions more.

"The invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, marked the beginning of the end, but it came at great cost. Many lives were lost as brave troops fought to protect our precious democracy.

"My own father, Albert (Bert) was there and thankfully survived. He was a career soldier who started the War in the London Irish Rifles but was rebadged to the Royal Engineers to assist in the formation of a Dock Operating Squadron where he served as

Squadron Sergeant Major. By D-Day, he was posted to a Dutch coastal vessel ferrying equipment, arms and ammunition to the Normandy beaches. This was a vital role to support the advancing Army. He and his men saw significant action on D-Day and the days that followed, constantly returning to the beaches with more supplies picked up from the UK. He also had responsibility for destroying all the equipment should the ship be captured - which fortunately did not happen.

"I joined the Royal Artillery as a young lad of 15 and my war was the Korean War. The army was my life for 25 years and I made great friendships which have lasted throughout most of my adult life. I know that camaraderie will have sustained many of those young men as they landed on the beaches. They were far from home, and they will have been scared. But they had a job to do, and they did it magnificently.

"These commemorations will be a fitting occasion to celebrate peace, liberty and reconciliation, while all the time remembering the service and sacrifice of soldiers, sailors and airmen from so many countries.

"It will be my great honour to light the Lamp Light of Peace in Portsmouth, hear my good friend Roy Palmer read out the poem he has written for schools, and for me to sing the wonderful Dame Vera Lynn classic *We'll Meet Again*. These bittersweet lyrics we know resonated with soldiers going off to fight, as well as their families and sweethearts back home."

**Sergeant Major Colin Thackery**  
Chelsea Pensioner

Please see the Lamp Light of Peace page on the D-Day 80 website [www.d-day80beacons.co.uk](http://www.d-day80beacons.co.uk)

