

“Whom did we fight in WW2? Youngsters haven’t a clue”

Shocking ignorance of WWII among the UK adult population revealed in new poll.

A recent nationwide poll of 2000 UK adults by Onepoll.com, published this month in five national newspapers and several Internet news outlets, has revealed a massive level of ignorance about World War II among the adult population in the UK. According to these publications, the poll found the following:

53% of those questioned claimed to be knowledgeable about the Second World War

BUT

36% do not know that France and the USA were our allies during the Second World War.

Over a third (and 66% of ‘Under 24s’) are not aware that the Battle of Britain took place in the war and 43% did not know that it happened in British airspace.

60% of adults surveyed could not name 1944 as the year of the D-Day landings in France.

32% didn’t know VE Day marks ‘Victory in Europe’ at the end of war.

32% were unaware that Pearl Harbour, site of a 1941 bombing that led to America joining the war, is in Hawaii.

30% had no idea that the London Blitz took place during WW2

INCREDIBLY, to Britons in the ‘over 60s’ age group,

10% have no idea that Adolf Hitler was involved in the war.

5% even believe that Britain was on the same side with Germany, Italy and Japan!

Dan Korn from television’s History Channel, who carried out the research, to mark the launch of its ‘World War True’ season, commented saying “Britain’s role in defying the Nazis was one of the most important in our recent history. This research shows the importance of telling its stories to the next generation so the fortitude and sacrifice of our forebears in the forces and on the home front, is not forgotten”.

The poll found that, in terms of where knowledge is gleaned, 51% believe the majority of education comes from school, while 57% say they pick up facts from TV programmes. Around 37% also rely on films, of which The Great Escape, Schindler’s List and Saving Private Ryan were found to be the top three Second World War films.

However, the teaching of modern history in UK schools has been so poor for more than two decades, that now current school teachers often appear more ignorant of basic facts about WWII than their more intelligent pupils.

This level of ignorance among the general population is something which FONFA seeks to reverse, through the FONFA Museum exhibits, our website and educational presentations to schools and interested groups in the local community - see our website header link to our "Presentations and Talks".

We hope that interested readers of this post will learn more about the local involvement and history of the New Forest in WWII, through the wealth of personal stories on our website and by visiting our FONFA Museum and the New Forest Airfields Memorial. In addition, if you know of an interested group who would like to hear a presentation on local military history, please see the list of topics and book a date, via the “Presentations and Talks” headline link above.

As the Eighteenth Century Anglo-Irish statesman, author and Philosopher Edmund Burke said, “Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it”.