

Stanley Johnson new

I had been hoping to wave a flag at the special concert in London's Royal Albert Hall, to mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day. I had planned to listen to Vera Lynn – she is only 103! – singing *We'll Meet Again*.

But events have put paid to such high hopes, so I am going to have to rely on my own still-vivid memories of that amazing day.

I was almost four on 8 May, 1944. My father was a pilot with RAF Coastal Command, based at Chivenor in North Devon. Both he and my mother and their four children lived off the base in a cottage in nearby Braunton.

When VE Day was declared, my older sister, Hilary, and I were keen to see the fun. My father was still recovering from a 'prang' the previous year, but we used one of the distress flags from his 'ditching kit' as an impromptu festive banner. We waved it as we walked into the village, attracting some good-natured comments from others

strut around very confidently, as though they own the place. Urbane foxes?

Talking about staying at home puts me in mind of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Harry and Meghan, who decided earlier this year not to stay at home at all. Personally, I am very sad to see them go. Their charitable work was fantastic, particularly the support they gave to wildlife conservation and women's issues.

Whose decision was it, I wonder, to build a new life in North America? I can't help thinking that Meghan, as we must now call her, played a leading role here. Possibly, this is down to a basic cultural difference between British women and their transatlantic counterparts.

I'm thinking of my mother, for example. After my father recovered from his war wounds, he decided to return to the West Country and become a farmer. My mother, who went to Cheltenham Ladies College and Oxford, and imagined she might marry

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heading in the same direction.

While my sister and I joined the crowd, my mother listened to Winston Churchill on the brown Bakelite wireless in the kitchen of our little cottage. 'My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not a victory of a party or of any class. It is a victory of the great British nation as a whole.'

It is too early for any kind of victory celebration in the war against Covid-19. It is not the beginning of the end; it is probably not even the end of the beginning. But I am quite confident, as our Prime Minister is, that the 'great British nation' will once again rise to the challenge.

Many of us, nowadays, following the strict instructions we have been given, are spending more time at home than we are used to. I am on friendly terms with a couple of foxes who appear in the garden of our London house around tea-time and

a diplomat, spent her next 36 years in the old, remote Exmoor farmhouse which I still have today. She took to heart the famous words in The Bible's book of Ruth: 'Whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.'

The Duchess of Sussex clearly has tremendous charm and talent, but I'm not sure she sets great store by the book of Ruth. For a man, home may be simply the place he hangs his hat. But for a woman, certainly for an American woman like Meghan, choosing where to live is an absolutely key decision.

You and your spouse can't both be in the driving seat. To adapt Princess Diana's famous saying, there's not always room for two people in a marriage!

Perfectionism and proper grammar. It struck me that dotting the i's and crossing the t's is one tiny way to feel a little more in control in turbulent times. Also, one of the reasons I love working on Saga Magazine is that the contributors (some, like me, within spitting distance of 80) always make a point of doing a good and thorough job. I don't throw toast at the radio – or should I say wireless – nowadays, when some BBC presenter makes a howler, but I often feel like it!

