

Version 21/05/20

WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE

MRS J Puts Out Her Bunting,

The Corn Market, Wimborne May 1995 (Revised 24 May 2020)

CAST LIST

SINGERS: Stewart/Sue; Dave; Sammy; Barbara Brann; Adrian/Lynnet; Tony

NEWS ANNOUNCERS/NARRATORS: Jeff; **Clare; Tam;** Sammy; Barbara B; **Sue;**

SANDY SUTCLIFFE, REPORTER for the Daily Sketch: Barbara H.

MRS JAMES'S FAMILY

MRS J - Sharon

LILY, daughter - Lynnet

RUBY, daughter – Gabriel

ELLEN, daughter – Eva

DICK , son, - John

TOM, son – Adrian

JOHN, son – Dave

NEAR NEIGHBOURS OF MRS J – Stewart and Sue

NEIGHBOURS OF MRS J: Tracie; Jessica; Kate; John

EVACUEES SCENE

BILLETING OFFICER – Sammy

The LEGG FAMILY

MRS LEGG – Tracie

IVY (*teen*) – Gabriel

DOREEN – Eva

ROY (*aged 10*) **Stewart**

THE DAVIES FAMILY

MRS DAVIES – Julie

MABEL– Jessica

BERTIE (*teenager*) – **Kate**

HARRY (*AGED 10*) – Tam

IN THE STREET

MR BUDDEN (*ARP WARDEN*) : Charlie

MRS HARRIS – Tuppy;

MRS CARTER- **Viv**

IN FRANCE (WITH TOM)

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sue

FRANCOISE (*TOM'S FRENCH GIRLFRIEND*) **Kate**

POEMS (p18-20)

READERS : Gill Clare; **Tuppy; Tam;** Jeff; Sue; Jessica; Barbara B; Viv

CHURCHILL: John

Scene 1: Celebrations	page 2
Scene 2: Evacuees	page 7
Scene 3: In the Street: MRS J Shows her Mementos	page 13
Scene 4: Dunkirk	page 19
Scene 5: Queues at the Canteen and Shops	page 20
Scene 6: Finale	page 24

Scene 1: Celebrations

As audience arrive, SFX Music by a Big Band plays WW2 hits.

As we start the play, they play a slow melody.

SFX We hear Churchill's Victory Speech played over loudspeakers

During this, MRS J comes out of a door in the Cornmarket. She puts her large canvas bag, containing key props, down at foot of the ladder. She climbs the ladder to put up bunting.

As Churchill's voice fades, music changes. A Pianist introduces loud conga-style rhythm: "Knees Up Mother Brown".

All the cast come on in two groups from either side of the Cornmarket, in a conga line singing and cheering, waving flags and holding newspapers. They move across the stage and around MRS J. Form up in two halves opposite each other and then move into the centre - hokey-cokey style.

SONG: KNEES UP MOTHER BROWN

STEWART/SUE (singing)

Oh, Knees up Mother Brown
Knees up Mother Brown
Come along, dearie, don't be slow
E-I, E-I, E-I-O!

This is your bloomin' birthday
So wipe away the frown!
Knees up, knees up
Don't get the breeze up

Knees up Mother Brown

DAVE (singing)

Oh, Knees up Mother Brown
Knees up Mother Brown
Under the table you must go
E-I, E-I, E-I-O!

Oh my, what a rotten song
What a rotten song
What a rotten song
Oh my, what a rotten song
What a rotten singer
Too-oo-oo!

Music changes and Sammy sings "Lili Marlene". Cast wave flags and sway and join in with the chorus.

SONG: LILI MARLENE

Sammy: Underneath the lantern by the barrack gate
Darling I remember the way you used to wait
'Twas there that you whispered tenderly
That you loved me
You'd always be
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

Adr/Lynnet W. Time would come for roll call
Time for us to part
Darling I'd caress you and press you to my heart
And there 'neath that far off lantern light
I'd hold you tight
We'd kiss good-night
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

: Orders came for sailing somewhere over there
All confined to barracks was more than I could bear
I knew you were waiting in the street
I heard your feet
But could not meet
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

Sammy: Resting in a billet just behind the line
Even tho' we're parted your lips are close to mine
You wait where that lantern softly gleams
Your sweet face seems to haunt my dreams
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene.

All cheer. Then immediately adopt patriotic poses and sing "There'll always be an England".

SONG: THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND

BARBARA B There'll always be an England,
While there's a country lane,
Wherever there's a cottage small
Beside a field of grain.

There'll always be an England,
While there's a busy street,
Wherever there's a turning wheel
A million marching feet

There'll always be an England,
And England shall be free,
If England means as much to you
As England means to me.

All shout: "Victory in Europe". All cheer. One by one cast step forward to shout out news as if sharing glad tidings.

Jeff: 'Germany Capitulates.' Daily Telegraph. *(All cheer)*

Clare: 'Europe at Peace.' Daily Herald. *(All cheer)*

Tam: 'It's All Over.' Daily Mail. *(All cheer)*

Sammy:
'Today is VE Day.' News Chronicle. *(All cheer)*

Barbara H/Jeff: 'MRS J Puts Out Her Bunting.' *(All cheer and point at MRS J who freezes.)*

SANDY (Bar H) *(steps forward, putting on a coat)*: Of course! That would be perfect for my article on VE Day for the Sketch. *(starts to write on pad)* "MRS James is sixty" ..

Cut to MEMBERS OF MRS J's family come forward reading newspaper with extreme interest.

LILY = Lynnet; RUBY = Gabriel; ELLEN = Eva.

SANDY sits at front of stage and 'writes' her article as they speak.

LILY : You know that woman Mum chars for? Well, she's gone and written an article!

RUBY *(reading aloud)* : "Mrs James is small with rather a pointed face" ...

ELLEN *(reading aloud)*: "And her eyes are dark and bright like a bird's" ...

LILY: "By profession, she's a charlady"

(The following dialogue happens more or less simultaneously)

NEAR NEIGHBOURS OF MRS J:

STEW Mrs J ... I know her well!

SUE: Mrs J? Me too! Very well.

VERY CLOSE NEIGHBOURS OF MRS J:

TRACIE: Mrs. J's our neighbour! ...

JESSICA gave us cuppa when we got bombed out ...

JOHN: Look - She's in the paper!

KATE: Well, she always was ever so hard-working..

CLARE: *(stepping forward with newspaper, shushing them, speaks to audience):* "That is not, you may think, a particularly distinguished or remarkable portrait ..."

SANDY... "but for me, and I have known her for a good many years now, Mrs James is ... a symbol."

All cheer and look at MRS J.

MRS J on the ladder comes to life, busily working. SANDY comes forward.

SANDY: You look very gay today, Mrs James.

MRS J: I am. Well, we've got a lot to be thankful for, haven't we? After all, we've won the war!

SANDY: You're right, of course, Mrs James. We have won the war!

ALL: *(chant)* We won the war, we won the war, EE-AI-ADDIO, we won the war!

The chanting sound gradually changes to the wail of sirens. All turn their backs and continue sound.

MRS J'S FRIEND (Barbara B) joins SANDY (BH) as if giving her information for her article. Barbara H writing.

BARBARA B: "In 1939 MRS James' three sons joined up. Dick was twenty-five, Tom was twenty-three and John, her baby, was only nineteen. Oh, and Lil, her daughter, she was twenty-one at the time"

One by one, the three sons (DICK = John, TOM = Adrian and JOHN =Stewart) step forward. They help her to get the bunting out of her bag as they say their goodbyes, telling her they'll miss her and promising to write. They form a tableau while sister Lil (Lynett) sobs.

DICK: Bye, Mum.

TOM: Cheerio, Mum.

JOHN: Take care, Mum.

DICK: We'll write,

TOM: Every week

JOHN: Soon be home.

LIL: Don't go, please don't go!

MRS J: My baby John! You will take care of him, won't you?

DICK: He'll be all right, Mum.

TOM: We'll look after him, Mum.

JOHN: I'll be all right, Mum.

(LIL, RUBY & ELLEN weep)

MRS J: Lil, stop all that soppy stuff, crying and all. It will do you no good. There's a war on. *(To BOYS)* I'm very proud of you all.

SANDY: SANDY: "Not only was Mrs J tremendously proud but like every other mother, a little frightened. Not that she ever said anything about that. It would have been 'soft' and Mrs James hated anything 'soft' or 'soppy'."

MRS J: You give that Mr Hitler hell, boys!

All turn to form CROWD, cheering the departing troops in 1939. The three boys march round the stage to the cheering of the crowd. Each stops at the front to say:

DICK: Dick, aged twenty-five, to the Artillery.

TOM: Tom, aged twenty-three, to the Infantry.

JOHN: John, aged nineteen, to the Navy.

SAMMY sings "Wish me Luck as you Wave me Goodbye", as the boys march off.

During this, MRS J descends from the ladder. She and Lynnet tidy up the bunting and join in with the song. The ladder is moved ready for the Evacuees' Scene.

SONG: WISH ME LUCK AS YOU WAVE ME GOODBYE

Sammy: Wish me luck as you wave me Goodbye.
Cheerio, here I go on my way.
Wish me luck as you wave me Goodbye.
Not a tear, but a cheer all the way.

Give me a smile
I can keep all the while
In my heart while I'm away.

Till we meet once again you and I,
Wish me luck as you wave me Goodbye.

(LIL & other JAMES girls are still crying)

MRS J: Oh, come on, girls! Lil, let's put the kettle on. *(They exit)*

As the song finishes, Sammy steps forward as The Billeting Officer and announces:

Sammy: 'October 1939. Evacuees are being sent to the safety of the countryside'.
Attention please, people of Wimborne. Prepare to receive your Southampton
evacuees who will be arriving in Wimborne today.

Scene 2: Evacuees

*DOWNSTAGE LEFT facing the front in a FREEZE of confusion and concern are the
evacuee family: the DAVISES of Southampton, carrying suitcases and cardboard gasmask
boxes. They remain in a Freeze during the first part of the scene.*

*From UPSTAGE RIGHT, carrying tables and chairs, the LEGG family of Wimborne enter :
MRS LEGG,(MUM): Tracie; IVY, teenager, Gabriel); DOREEN, 12 = Eva; ROY 7 (Stewart)
The children set out the table and chairs for the new guests.*

MRS LEGG: Come on, help me get things together. We've got a lot to do. Come on, girls,
quickly.

IVY (Gabriel) Mum, how many are there going to be?

MRS LEGG: I don't know but I know there's a lot to be done.

DOREEN (Eva): I wonder what they'll be like?

MRS LEGG: I don't know – you'll have to wait and see.

IVY: Well, I've had a look at them at school and they all look horrible.

ROY: What d'you mean?

IVY: Scruffy! And rather.... smelly

DOREEN: Really? Ugh!

MRS LEGG: Well, I think that's very unkind of you. They're coming all the way from Southampton and we must make them welcome. These poor people have had to leave their homes because of the war. And I want you all to be very, very kind to them. You got that?

DOREEN goes to look for the evacuees.

DOREEN (*pointing*): Look, look, they're here! (*ALL look Left*)

Roy: Look - one of them is picking his nose! (*Children react squirming*)

MRS LEGG: Shh..

*THE LEGGS freeze as The DAVISES FAMILY, evacuated from Southampton, enter - MRS DAVIES = JULIE; MABEL, young girl = JESSICA; BERT, the eldest boy = KATE; HARRY, the younger boy = TAM
The children run about, playing a game of tag and making a lot of noise*

MRS DAVIES: Oi! Enough of that racket! Unless you want a clip round the lughole? How am I cope with you lot in a strangers' house?

BERT: Can I go and have a look at that old church, Mum? Lovely lead on the roof!

MRS DAVIES: No. Stay here, Bert. So, how did you get on at your new school, anyway?

MABE: Really boring.

BERT: I thought it was alright.

MRS D: Was it now?

HARRY: When are we going back to Southampton, Mum? Boring here. Too many cows and not enough boats.

MRS D: Never mind about that now. All in good time. Now, listen, you lot - come close! You're on your absolute best behaviour in this house! D'you hear me?

CHILDREN: Yes, Mum.

MRS D: 'Cos I'll skin you alive if you let me down!

IVY opens the door to the Davis family. An awkward pause.

MRS LEGG (*briskly*): Come in, come in. Do you want to put your cases down there for now? (*to Harry*) What's your name? Well, you look about the same age as my Roy. Roy, why don't you take him outside and play in the back yard?

(*The boys leave, chatting*)

Roy: Do you like football?

Harry: Yeah, I support Southampton.

Roy: I like them too!

MRS LEGG: Don't be long.

(*BOYS exit chanting "Come on you Saints!"*)

DOREEN (*to MABEL*): Hello, I'm Doreen. What's your name? (*Mabel sticks her tongue out and blows raspberry*)

MRS LEGG: You must be Mrs Davis, lovely to see you. You must be dying for a cup of tea?

MRS DAVIES: I'm dying for a drink.

MRS LEGG: Ivy, put the kettle on. Cup of tea?

MRS DAVIES: No, ta. I saw *The George* across the way. I'll just go and grab a quick beer.

MRS LEGG: Ahem...Mrs Davies, ladies in Wimborne don't go to public houses by themselves.

MRS DAVIES: Don't they? Well, they do in Southampton, love. (*Exits*) Back soon. Bye.

BERT: Mum, Mum, can I have half a shandy? You said I could go to the pub before.

MRS DAVIES: No, no, you can't! Get inside. (*She exits*)

MRS LEGG looks shocked.

MABEL: I'm starving. When we going to have some grub?

MRS LEGG: I'm sure you are, dear. We better have something to eat quickly. But perhaps you'd all like a little wash?

MABEL: Nah! Don't like water!.

MRS LEGG: Doreen, show them where they can wash their hands. Ivy, you help me.

BERT (*who has been oggling Ivy*): I bet you can show me where the taps are.

IVY: I'm not showing you anything!

MRS LEGG: Roy! (*Roy and Harry enter*) Come and wash your hands, boys. Harry, make sure you wash them well. You too, Bert.

The children noisily crowd around the sink, scuffling and pushing each other.

IVY: They're not very polite, are they?

MRS LEGG (*Aside to IVY*): Now, now, just remember, dear. They've had to leave their homes! (*To ALL*) Come to the table please!

Children all run in. Ivy, Doreen and Roy stand behind their chairs, THE DAVIES sit down

MRS LEGG: That's right. Stand up, please, for grace.

BERT: Who's Grace? Is she as pretty as Ivy?

MS LEGG: We always say a prayer before we eat. Now, hands together. Doreen, would you like to say Grace?

DOREEN: For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful.

THE LEGGS: Amen.

They sit. LILY and IVY bring the food. IVY sits down.

MRS LEGG: Here we are then. Get those vegetables for me, Ivy. Don't just sit there!

Evacuee children are about to pounce on the food.

MRS LEGG: Manners, please! Eat nicely.

HARRY: What is it?

ROY: It's rabbit pie. I shot it myself!

IVY: Fibber!

ROY: Did too!

Evacuee children laugh. Then without talking, they grab and gobble the food.

IVY (*Aside*): Disgusting.

DOREEN (*Aside*): Like pigs.

ROY (*Aside*): Horrible.

The Evacuees become noisier and an argument builds.

MABEL: Oi! Give me back that spud!

HARRY: What spud?

MABEL (*taking it*) THAT ONE!

HARRY: STOP IT! (*Hits her*)

MABEL: Ow!

Sammy (The BILLETING OFFICER) interrupts.

B.O. Cooee! Mrs Legg, is it? Jolly good. Just come to see if the Davis family have settled in and I see they have. You must be young Albert. Is that right?

Bert: Yes.

B.O. (*to DOREEN by mistake*) And you must be Mabel?

DOREEN: She's Mabel.

B.O. Ah, hello, Mabel. Jolly good. And you must be Harold. Well done. That's splendid. Enjoy your meal.

MRS LEGG: Could I have a word with you.

B.O. Yes, certainly, my dear.

MRS LEGG: Their mother's gone over to The George – left me with them and gone off to the pub!

B.O. Well, we all have to do our bit, dear.

MRS LEEGG: And their manners are awful.

B.O.: Well, never mind. You're lucky you've got the mother with them. That's a help. Now, we've had a little problem at school. Do you mind if ...

MRS LEGG: With my children?

B.O.: No, my dear, I rather think it's something to do with the evacuees so if I could just have a moment with them.

(CLAPS) Children! Elbows off the table. Thank you. Now, as you know, we all put chocolate bars in our gasmask boxes, don't we? Well, I'm afraid to have to say this, children, but today at school some of those chocolate bars went missing. And I rather think that there's somebody at this table who might know something about it.
(PAUSE) I tell you what I'll do. I'm going to stand over there and as soon as you have some information for me, you come and tell me.

BERT: It wasn't me.

Roy puts his hand up and crosses to the Billeting Officer.

ROY: I saw him, that boy there, (*pointing at BERT*) taking chocolate from the gasmask boxes in the cloakroom at school.

B.O.: That boy there?

Roy: Yes, that boy.

B.O.: Well, jolly good, little boy. Well done for telling.

MRS LEGG: Well done, Roy.

BERT: LITTLE SNEAK!

HARRY & MABEL: "Tell-tale-tit, your tongue will be slit and all the little puppy dogs will have a little bit!"

IVY: Leave our Roy alone!

DOREEN: Your manners are appalling!

B.O. Now, goodness me, stop that quarrelling! Come along, come along..

Mrs Davis reappears)

MRS DAVIES: What's going on here?

B.O. Ah, Mrs Davis, so pleased to meet you. Now, my dear, there seems to have been a little bit of trouble at school today.

MRS DAVIES: Trouble?

B.O. Yes, I rather think the finger of guilt is pointing at your young Albert.

Bert: Mum, I didn't do it.

MRS DAVIES: Sit down, Bert.

MRS J Puts Out Her Bunting, The Corn Market, Wimborne 1995
© copyright Wimborne Community Theatre

B.O. He took some chocolate bars from the gas-mask boxes.

MRS DAVIES: What? Hang on a minute! Bert! Did you take them?

Bert: ER....No, no, no.

MRS DAVIES: Are you sure?

Bert: No – I mean...Yes, yes.

MRS DAVIES: Positive?

Bert: Yes, Mum.

MRS DAVIES (to BILLETING OFFICER): See? My boy wouldn't do a thing like that.

MRS LEGG: Do you believe him?

MRS DAVIES: Of course, I believe him.

MRS LEGG: So you're telling me that my son is a liar? My children don't tell lies.

*A row breaks out with both women on either side of the table.
The Billeting Officer breaks the fight up.*

B.O.: Ladies, please. Don't you know there's a war on? We are supposed to be on the same side. Now we'll say no more about this chocolate incident on this occasion. Let's just try to rally the Home Front, eh? Put on a brave face! Jolly good, I'll see myself out.

An awkward silence. No one budes. The children are still. The Mothers on either side fold their arms. The Billeting Officer is pleased with herself and goes to leave. She turns and looks at her clipboard.

B.O.: Oh, I've just remembered, Mrs Legg - I've got you down for 3 Welsh soldiers next week.

MRS LEGG: Three Welsh soldiers! Where'll I put them?

B.O.: Must dash! Tootle-pip!

All exit

Scene 3: In the Street: MRS J Shows her Mementos of her Boys

After the Evacuees' Scene, cast strike the set and Jeff steps forward to announce:

Jeff: 'February 1940 – The Allied Armies advance their brave campaign.'

SONG: *RUN, RABBIT, RUN*

STEWART/SUE: Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run
Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run
Bang, bang, bang, goes the farmer's gun
So run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run.

Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run
Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run
Don't give the farmer his fun, fun, fun
He'll get by without his rabbit pie
So run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run.

All cheer and exit, singing "Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run ..."

(LILY, MR BUDDEN (ARP WARDEN)(Charlie), MRS HARRIS (Tuppy) & MRS CARTER (Viv) come to front)

MRS HARRIS: In my opinion, these evacuees are nothing but trouble!

MRS CARTER: Nothing but trouble!

LILY: I wouldn't go that far //...

MRS H: //Don't know how to behave...

MRS CARTER: Shocking!

MR BUDDEN: I've had a few run ins with the teenagers – scrumping apples! Chucking stones at cows!

MRS HARRIS: No!

MRS CARTER: Shocking!

MRS J enters, carrying her bag, and overhears remarks about the evacuees.

MRS J: There's a war on, you know. We all have to do our part to beat Hitler. No use complaining and grumbling.

MR BUDDEN: How are those fine lads of yours doing, Mrs James?

MRS J: Oh, they're brave boys.

MRS HARRIS: Oh yes, they **are** brave!

MRS J Puts Out Her Bunting, The Corn Market, Wimborne 1995
© copyright Wimborne Community Theatre

MRS CARTER: Very brave – heroes!

LILY: Show them what they sent you, Mum! Go on! Lovely things!

(MRS J gets things out of her bag):

MRS J: Well, here's a picture of my Tom – he's in France.

LILY: And just look at that girl he's got his arm round!

MR BUDDEN: A French girl, I'll be bound.

MRS H: Oh yes, she looks French.

MRS CARTER: Very!

All: Aaah!

TOM & FRANCOISE move out Stage Left to make a photograph of TOM with his arms around her waist. PHOTOGRAPHER (SUE) arrives.

FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER (*accented!*): Smile, mes amis! S'il vous plait!

FRANCOISE (THE FRENCH GIRL-FRIEND): Mon chere Tommy! Comme je t'adore!

TOM: Oh I say! (*To PHOTOGRAPHER*) Can you take another picture for my Mum, Madem-waa-zell?

FRANCOISE: Et pour ma maman, s'il vous plait? Merci beaucoup!

SUE: Encore, smile! Zay Fromage! (*Freeze*)

LILY: Ooh, I reckon there'll be wedding bells soon, Mum!

MRS HARRIS (*bit shocked*): Hmmm....She is ...French though!

MRS CARTER: Very.

MRS J: Time will tell.

MR BUDDEN: And what about the other lad - in the Army?

MRS J: Dick?

MR BUDDEN: That's the boy!

LILLY: Show them what he sent you, Mum!

MRS J reaches in her bag and brings out a brooch.

MRS HARRIS: That's beautiful! Er...What is it exactly?

MRS CARTER: Yes. Exactly.

MR BUDDEN: It's his regimental badge, isn't it, Mrs James?

MRS H & C: Ooh!

MRS J: That's right. He sent me his badge. *(Freeze)*

(DICK (JOHN) appears and stands Centre Stage writing letter to MRS J).

DICK: We're a fine group of lads, Mum. I'm sending my regimental badge just for you. It's all quiet here but we expect to see some action in the next couple of weeks... *(Freeze)*

MRS H: Nice that he remembered his mother.

MRS C: Nice.

MR BUDDEN: A lot of young men don't bother.

MRS H: And your youngest, Mrs James? How's he doing?

MRS J: Oh, he hasn't forgotten me! He sent me something as well!

MRS J gets a camel cushion out of her bag. Townspeople all exclaim.

MRS H: Oh, I say. Quite exquisite.

MRS C: Eh?

MR BUDDEN: Nice!

LILY: I told you. Typical Johnny.

MRS J: My baby, John.

Freeze. JOHN comes on and takes up position Stage Left.

JOHN: My diary by John James. Monday 28th February 1941. "It's my last day of leave today and me and some of the lads went round the local bazaar. Tommy got a smashing ivory pipe and I got a wonderful cushion cover for our mum. It's really hot out here although we hope it's going to be cooler out at sea. We ship out at noon tomorrow. We expect to see our first patrol just

after nightfall. It's going to be my first taste of action and I really don't know what to expect. Touch wood, I'm still going to be here tomorrow..." (Freeze)

MR BUDDEN: Fine boy. And to think – all those miles away from home. Doing his bit for King and country.

MRS H Don't you worry about him, Mrs J? He's so very young!

MRS J: Too busy for worrying. I'm proud of him. Proud of all of them.

MR BUDDEN: So you should be, Mrs J! Fine lads, a credit to you and your late husband.

MRS C: God rest his soul.

MRS H: Just like all those other fine lads fighting in France! A credit...

MRS CARTER: ...to their King and country!

They move back as all cast form lines to march and sing Tipperary.

SONG: *IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY*

Tony (*marching on the spot*): It's a long way to Tipperary
It's a long way to go
It's a long way to Tipperary
To the sweetest girl I know!
Goodbye Piccadilly
Farewell Leicester Square
It's a long, long way to Tipperary
But my heart's right there!

The song changes to a hum as GILL & CLARE come forward to read the poem "War Song" by Vernon Scannell. Cast continue to march on the spot and hum gently throughout the poem.

GILL

And then, down country lanes, the crop-haired sons
And nephews of the skeletons of Flanders
Made seance of their march, as, on their tongues,
The old ghosts sang again of Tipperary,
Packing kit-bags, getting back to Blighty.

CLARE

But soon, bewildered, sank back to their graves
When other songs were bawled - a jaunty music
With false, bragging words: The Siegfried Line
Transformed with comic washing hanging from it."

Pause. All sing the following lines of Siegfried Line while continuing to march.

SONG: THE SIEGFRIED LINE

SAMMY (*singing*)

We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line
Have you any dirty washing, mother dear?
We're gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line
'Cos the washing day is here!

TAM (*speaking*)

Sergeants and Corporals were blessed, the barrel rolled;
But behind the grinning words and steady tramping
The Sergeant of the dark was taking names
And marking time to that lugubrious singing.

TUPPY

(sings) "We're saying goodbye to them all": (*speaks*) and, far away
From gunpit, barrack-square and trench, the mother
Sewed the dark garments for tomorrow's mourning."

Freeze.

DEATH ENTERS in black hooded cloak, carrying scythe stands at the back on block above troops, marching on spot.

MRS J stands watching by the tree.

Jeff: 'Dreadful carnage in France as our Army is forced to retreat.'

Death swoops with the scythe as all move backwards in slow motion. Only TOM is left with FRANCOISE as in the photo. Death slices photo in half and FRANCOISE runs off weeping. Death wraps TOM in cloak and takes him off.

Drumbeat.

SANDY "One brilliant summer's morning in 1940 MRS James came to work at my house a little late. She looked very small and pale in her old black coat and the hat she always wore with a dagger hat-pin and black osprey trimmings. She took a telegram out of the old canvas bag and handed it to me."

MRS J enters and hands telegram to SANDY who takes it and reads aloud.

SANDY: "We regret to inform you that Thomas James has been killed in action." Oh, Mrs James, Mrs James, I'm so sorry. Do sit down.

MRS J: No, that's war, that is. Now I've got work to do, Mrs S. I've got to keep going. There's a lot to be done. I've got to do that bit of washing up and then I'll go through the front room as usual. We can't let Mr Hitler get the better of us, can we?

Barbara: You are a brick, MRS James!

Work Sequence: MRS J turns her back to audience and mimes washing up in a manic stylised way to a steady drumbeat.

Scene 4: Dunkirk

Jeff steps forward and announces.

Jeff: 'May 1940. Thousands saved in evacuation from Dunkirk beaches.'

The cast enter from both sides walking heavily and wearily. They form lines and perform the poem From Dunkirk by B G Bonnallack in three groups.

JEFF: "We formed in line beside the water's edge.
The little waves made oddly home-like sounds,
Breaking in half-seen surf upon the strand.

SUE: The night was full of noise; the whistling thud
The shells made in the sand, and pattering stones;
The cries cut short, the shouts of units' names;
The crack of distant shots, and bren gun fire:

BARBARA BRANN: The sudden clattering crash of masonry.
Steadily, all the time, the marching tramp
Of feet passed by along the shell-torn road,
Under the growling thunder of the guns.

JESSICA: The major said "The boats cannot get in,
There is no depth of water. Follow me."
And so we followed, wading in our ranks
Into the blackness of the sea. And there,
Lit by the burning oil across the swell,

We stood and waited for the unseen boats.

GILL: Oars in the darkness, rowlocks, shadowy shapes
Of boats that searched. We heard a seaman's hail.
Then we swam out, and struggled with our gear,
Clutching the looming gunwales. Strong hands pulled,

CLARE: And we were in and heaving with the rest,
Until at last they turned. The dark oars dipped,
The laden craft crept slowly out to sea,
To where in silence lay the English ships."

JOHN B on ladder delivers Churchill speech.

Cast continue to make rowing motion but change tableau during rendition.

John: From a speech by Winston Churchill to the House of Commons.
"But all the aid of the sand, and all the prowess of the air would have been in vain without the sea. The instructions given ten or twelve days before, had under the pressure of emotional events, born amazing fruit. Perfect discipline prevailed ashore and afloat. The sea was calm. To and fro between the shore and the ships plied the little boats gathering the men from their beaches as they waded out – or picking them from the water with total indifference to the air bombardments which often claimed its victims. Their numbers alone defied air attack. The mosquito armada as a whole was unsinkable.
(Cast start humming as final tableau is formed)
In the midst of our defeat glory came to the island people. United and unconquerable, the tale of the Dunkirk beaches will shine in whatever records are preserved of our affairs."

Cast exit but John (as DICK) is left behind. DEATH reappears with scythe and claims him.

Tuppy hands telegram to MRS J and then leaves.

SANDY on Stage Right and MRS J on Stage Left.

SANDY: "A week after the first telegram, MRS James received another."

MRS J hands telegram to Barbara. Telegram again read. Silence.

SANDY: "During the evacuation of Dunkirk Dick's ship bringing him home had a direct hit. He was killed instantaneously. After that MRS James began to work furiously."

Work Sequence: MRS J alone Centre Stage mimes working in manic stylised way to drumbeat.

Scene 5: Queues at the Canteen and Shops

MRS H (TUPPY): "After her morning's charring, MRS James would go to a Forces canteen to wash up."

All queue up on diagonal line. Each gives a catch phrase as they receive food from MRS J. Sequence ends with.

Jeff: What? No bananas?

(ALL: *standing in line at back, facing front*): Yes, we have no bananas
We have no bananas today!

SUE: “During the lunch hour she did her shopping and queued for fish and vegetables for her daughter who was having a baby.”

Cast all pick up bags and form queue at the shop moving into profile and singing Bananas Song again as they advance Offstage Right.

MRS J and LIL are discussing LIL’S imminent baby.

MRS J: Lil, what are you doing on your feet? You ought to be sitting down.

LILY: I’m all right, Mum.

MRS J: But you should take care of yourself in your condition.

LILY: You’re the one who needs to take it easy. After all that’s...//

MRS J (*interrupts*): Stop it, Lil. You’ve always been one to get upset and it’ll do you no good. I’ll put the kettle on and make a nice cup of tea. (*exits*)

LILY (*crosses to SANDY*): “Mum seldom talked about Tom and Dick. I don’t think she could trust herself and she was so frightened of being ‘soft’. But she wore Dick’s regimental badge proudly on her coat and a pendant with a picture of the Eiffel Tower on it which Tom had sent from Paris.” (*exits*)

Sound effect of war planes. Lynnet and Barbara pause and listen. Jeff, Tracey and Sammy come out with newspapers.

Jeff: ‘December 1941. Pearl Harbour attacked by Japanese planes. Many US ships lost.’

Tracie: ‘8th December 1941. It’s official! President Roosevelt says Americans to enter War!’

Sammy: ‘March 1943. US troops will be billeted locally in the grounds of Kingston Lacy.’

GLEN MILLER music 1940s music.

Mime as all move either side of the stage in consternation. Jeff, Stewart, Dave, John and Adrian run on as Yanks and build a ‘jeep’ centre, facing Downstage, with four chairs.

(ALL CAST COME AND CHEER OR DISAPPROVE)

MABEL: Look, ! It's a real jeep! I wish I could drive it!

IVY: I wonder if they speak like in the Movies?

GIs:

ADRIAN: Howdy! We've come over here to save you guys!

JOHN: Hey, folks, is there a cinema here - you know, c-i-n-e-ma here in sleepy old Wimborne?

IVY: Yes, there is. It's called the Tivoli – and it's up West Borough! (*a bit snobbishly*) Actually, it's rather a fine Art Deco building...

DAVE (*interrupting, in southern drawl*): What's that? The T-i-vo-li!

MRS DAVIES (*calling out*): Have you got any nylons, sweetheart?

JEFF: Hey, baby, you're real cute. How d'ya like to go for a walk with me, down by the river, doll?

MRS DAVIES: What about me kids?

JEFF (*losing interest*): ER....see you later, alligator!,

JOHN: We'll win the war for you – just you wait and see!

All react differently. Americans rush off and rest of cast follows.

MRS HARRIS: You'd think they own the place!

MRS CARTER: Wouldn't mind a nice pair of nylons, mind!

MR BUDDEN: They make a lot of noise!

MRS J interrupts

MRS J Hello, Mr Budden. Did I hear you talking about those nice USA boys? Dear-dear! They're doing their bit. Helping us win the war. We ought to welcome them here.

SANDY: You're right, MRS James, right as usual!
"And so MRS James continued, rallying us in difficult times. It seemed nothing could make her flinch. Until last year. 1944."

Jeff comes on with newspaper.

JEFF: 'Fierce fighting at sea. Many allied ships feared lost.'

JEFF delivers telegram to MRS J as he exits. Tableau of Dave as son JOHN in boat with Death who paddles him across the stage with scythe.

SANDY: "After that I thought MRS James was going to pieces. She became incredibly thin and nothing would induce her to stop working. She never talked about herself. But all the light had gone out of her bright bird's eyes."

Work Sequence: MRS J backed by cast mimes frantic work movements while muttering the names of the dead sons.

MRS J: "Dick .. Tom .. John ..Dick..Tom..John.....DICK...TOM...JOHN.."

Work sequence draws to a climax. Sounds transform to make a doodlebug roar. Silence.

Flying Bomb. Men appear carrying ONE OF THE CAST - if this were a 'real' performance, it would be you, Eva! They raise her up and, in slow motion, set her carefully on the ground.

Jeff steps forward.

Jeff: '1944. Hitler's last threat! Flying bombs hit our cities!'

ALL: Loud explosions. MRS J climbs the step ladder. She changes into an angry roar and a tirade against Hitler et al.

MRS J (*angry*): So you think you can frighten us, do you, you so-and-so? Can't even have the guts to come over here and fight us man to man, you, strutting little popinjay! Sending blinkin' bomb planes what haven't got proper pilots in 'em! You miserable moustachioed manikin! You dirty devil! You've had all of them. All my boys, even my baby. You come here and I'll show you what proper war is. I'd tan your blinking hide with my blessed broom ... so help me, I'd ... //

Barbara (*interrupting*):/"All her old fighting spirit came back. Her invective and sarcasm against so unmilitary a weapon of war were a joy to hear!"

Jeff (*headline*): 'Hitler's armies on the retreat! Allied invasion of France imminent!'

All cheer.

*Reprise of Songs: (LYNETT/ADRIAN
Run Rabbit/Siegfried Line. All cast march again.*

Scene 6: Finale

VE Celebrations repeated: All shout

ALL: “**Victory in Europe**”. *(All cheer. One by one cast step forward to shout out news as if sharing glad tidings).*

Jeff: ‘Germany Capitulates.’ Daily Telegraph. *(All cheer)*

SUE: ‘Europe at Peace.’ Daily Herald. *(All cheer)*

CLARE: ‘It’s All Over.’ Daily Mail. *(All cheer)*

Sammy: ‘Today is VE Day.’ News Chronicle. *(All cheer)*

TUPPY: ‘MRS J Puts Out Her Bunting.’ *(All cheer and point at MRS J who freezes.)*

Cast move into tableaux of different stages of MRS J’s life with lines repeated from previous scenes. Tableaux move and speak down the line until Barbara at end.

SANDY: You look very gay today, MRS James.

MRS J: I am. Well, we’ve got a lot to be thankful for, haven’t we? After all, we’ve won the war!

SANDY *(after pause)*: I wanted to say - No, MRS James, *you’ve* won the war! You and your boys!

All turn to face the THREE SONS and listen in profile as they recite the poem:
Polliciti Meliora by Frank Thompson.

DICK
:
As one who, gazing at a vista
Of beauty, sees the clouds close in,
And turns his back in sorrow, hearing
The thunderclouds begin.

TOM
So we, whose life was all before us,
Our hearts with sunlight filled,
Left in the hills our books and flowers,
Descended, and were killed.

DAVE

Write on the stones no words of sadness -
Only the gladness due,
That we, who asked the most of living,
Knew how to give it too.

*All face front and change mood for **Song: Knees up Mother Brown**, which starts slowly with a single voice. SUE joins in and it gets louder.*

STEWART

Oh, Knees up Mother Brown
Knees up Mother Brown
Come along, dearie, don't be slow
E-I, E-I, E-I-O!

SUE joins STEWART

Oh, Knees up Mother Brown
Knees up Mother Brown
Come along, dearie, don't be slow
E-I, E-I, E-I-O!

This is your bloomin' birthday
So wipe away the frown!
Knees up, knees up
Don't get the breeze up
Knees up Mother Brown

THE END