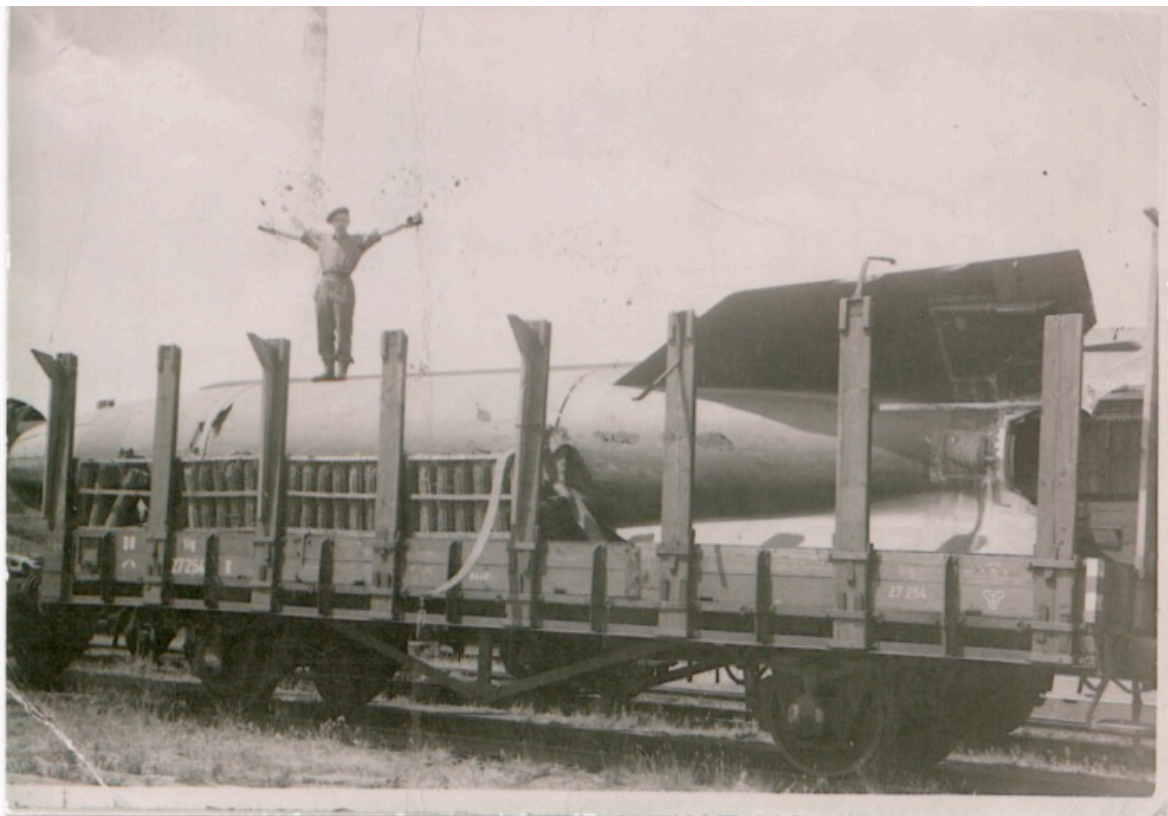


Pvt. Rodford Riddell - RASC

Hello. My name is Richard Riddell. I have lived with Millie my wife in Burton for over ten years now after moving from the Bristol area. Oscar, our Chocolate Labrador, has been with us since 2011. However, I was brought up in Manchester and we are commemorating VE Day by thinking of my father, Rodford Riddell (d 2003). He was a private in the Royal Army Service Corps, worked for the Lt Colonel (Shepherd I think) who invented the Sten Gun (a sub machine gun used by British Paratroopers and others until the 1960s) and was part of a Special Weapons Group attached to General Montgomery's HQ Staff. Their insignia was a shield with crossed swords.

My father 'went over' to Northern France in his landing craft on D Day Plus One (June 7th, 1944) and proceeded with his unit through Normandy into Germany, which is where he was during 1945 and VE Day. As he travelled, he took black and white photographs, many of which I have, but they don't include locations frustratingly. Here are two, taken (I think) after the German surrender.

The first one is of my father in uniform with his arms outstretched standing on a V2 Rocket loaded onto a railway wagon. V2 rockets were built by slave labour near Nordhausen, Thuringia, and were launched by the Nazi Government to hit Allied targets with high explosives in 1944 and 1945. They began with targeting London and then moved on to Holland after the Allied D Day landings. V2s were the first rockets officially to enter space and the team that developed them in Germany were then recruited to work on the American space programme. I guess this photo was taken near Nordhausen.



The second photo taken by my father was of equipment that had been confiscated from German troops after they surrendered. It shows stacks and stacks of infantry helmets. Their characteristic shape was often referred to as a 'coal scuttle' by Allied troops (imagine the picture upside down). This was the bucket we used to bring coal inside for our fires before we had gas and certainly central heating for our homes. Coal scuttles usually rested on our hearths in front of the fireplace. The helmets' shape was often one of the first ways of recognising an approaching enemy, my father told me, as well as the size of their Panzer tanks.

