

## Ramblers newsletter10 01/06/20

I hope that you, your family and your friends remain safe and well in these difficult times.

Copies of the newsletters, the quizzes and answers are posted on our website, on the Events and Communications page, on **Mondays**.

<http://www.ashdownramblers.btck.co.uk/>

At long last the lock-down restrictions are being gradually relaxed. However, the advice from the Ramblers Association remains the same – **“All Ramblers group walks and activities remain suspended until further notice”**.

As I stated last week - a big thank you to everyone who sent in articles about their memories of WW2 and life during the 1940's. This week's newsletter includes memories from Jeff D, Jenny F and Margery P. More memories to follow in next week's newsletter.

Stay Safe

Grace

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## Ashdown Ramblers memories of World War2

### Jeff D - Memories

My parents were married on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939, the day after war was declared. They left for a honeymoon in Cornwall, by car, but petrol went onto ration and with the fear of invasion they returned the next day!

I was born in September 1941 at The Sussex Maternity Hospital, Buckingham Road, Brighton, one month premature at a weight of just two and a half pounds. After a prolonged stay in hospital I was released home to my parents living at Stanford Avenue Brighton. At this time they were living with my maternal grandparents. My first cot and pushchair was a wicker shopping basket as I was so small. I gained weight and became a 6 foot 2 inch giant weighing in at eighteen stone!

My father was in a reserved occupation. He was employed by Brighton Corporation as a Foreman Gardener in charge of Dyke Road Park, situated on the border with Hove. The playing fields and cricket pitches were ploughed and put over to food production. The park railings disappeared for the war effort.

My Grandmother at this time ran a chain of five fish and chip shops in Brighton and Hove, and my mother managed the shop in Coombe Terrace, Lewes Road, Brighton. I was taken



to the shop in the basket and it was a very busy premises, as it was situated opposite Preston Barracks occupied by Canadian troops.

I recall that in my formative years I spent my nights in a Morrison Shelter, situated in the rear dining room, which doubled as a table. The Morrison shelter was an indoor cage that was



designed to protect occupants from masonry and debris if the house was hit by a bomb.

In the event of an air raid warning it got quite cosy with the addition of four adults! For more information see <https://ww2today.com/27th-march-1941-the-morrison-shelter-is-introduced>

I recall that from the rear back bedroom I could see two barrage balloons which were flying over the shops situated in Preston Drive, at

Five Ways, Brighton. On another occasion I was with my Grandmother walking in Stanford Avenue when we witnessed a daylight bombing raid on the railway viaduct between Brighton and London Road Stations, we could see the bombs falling.

I was not a perfect child. I am told that I was caught trying to flush our pet cat down the toilet! Poor thing later committed suicide under the wheels of a number 14 bus!

### **Jenny F - Memories**

Living near the Queen Victoria Hospital, it was a common sight to see airmen with burnt faces, hands and limbs. Often with their skin grafts left attached to the original site and to the burnt areas (pedicle's) being treated, or with metal frameworks attached to their jaws, the airmen's appearance provoked very little comment - we were indeed the 'town that didn't stare'.

My sister (3 years older than me) used to go to the QVH to roll up laundered bandages and the mother of a friend was employed there, machine embroidering the hospital name on linen - imagine that now!

We also had parents of burned airmen staying for a night or two in our tiny bungalow whilst visiting their sons. We got to know the staff quite well and one nurse lodged with us for a while. We were friendly with Sister Cherry Hall, sister of Matron Hall and my mum, who was a dressmaker, sewed for both of them.

Although only 5 at the time and not fully understanding, I knew that when the engines stopped of those 'Doodlebugs (V1s) it was dangerous. In that year of 1944, a group of boarders were evacuated from our Lingfield convent to another in Hinckley, Leicestershire, probably for about 6 months. My mother came with us and the two of us had super billets (I was with a childless couple who spoilt me rotten and with whom I kept in touch for many years). My sister was not as fortunate as she was placed in two different billets who expected her to skivvy for them and wash, dress and feed the children. Our dad was full time involved as a member of the Red Cross and was also in the ARP (Air Raid Precautions). He was involved in pulling people out of the Whitehall when it was bombed.

A Morrison shelter was installed in one of the rooms in our bungalow, taking up most of the room. We slept there every night and went there whenever the warning siren sounded in the day. We had our own personal alarm system as our cat would bring her 3 kittens into the shelter, often well before the siren could be heard.

Frank B's mention of craters reminded me of how we used to play in those craters in Stone Quarry Woods all day after the war and would only return when we heard the hospital clock strike the appointed hour. None of us had watches then. I remember too when our coal was delivered by a man covered in black dust, ingrained in his skin, his peaked cap worn backwards, as he heaved the heavy sacks into our coal shed. His cart horse waited patiently in the road, kept stationary by a bag of oats placed over his mouth.

### **Margery P - Memories**

I was 10 in October 1939. Alan and I were both at the little local church school in Upper Norwood, near Crystal Palace, and we were evacuated by train to (of all places) Brighton, before the war had even started. I lasted two weeks before I asked to come home and Alan says he stuck it out for a month. It must have been hell for the teachers, as they used to teach us in the mornings and take us to the beach in the afternoon.

Later in 1940 when the docks and the city were bombed, turning the sky red, we went into a trench in the garden dug by my father and covered with a tree trunk, as we still didn't have a shelter. I was then sent over to my aunt, cousins and grandmother in Isleworth and from there my uncle drove us down to Bere Alston, behind Plymouth, for a holiday. As we drove over the moors, we could see that Plymouth was alight with bombs and fire. I went rabbiting with the men, saw apples in the apple loft and butter pats in the dairy.

When uncle turned up at the end of our holiday, it was with a removal van! We learnt that we weren't going back home but to a small village outside Winchester called Pitt, where we settled for many months. I was a bit older than my two cousins and rather independent, so I made friends with a young tractor driver, who let me drive the tractor. What a joy: no health and safety then. I told stories to my cousins at bed time, which they still remember.

Home to Norwood this time meant a scholarship to grammar school and my mother chose the one in the old Archbishops' palace in Croydon. The air raid shelter was in part of the Undercroft and we wouldn't have stood a chance if a bomb had fallen on the school. Towards the end of the war, lots of doodle bugs (the V1 rockets with a noisy engine) started falling near us and in July, 1944, one landed not far from our house, breaking all the windows, with the body of the rocket actually on the pavement outside.

When at last VE Day came, we had a street party and one of the Dads got drunk. By the time VJ Day came, I was old enough to cycle off the nine miles downhill to the centre of London and join with the crowds outside Buckingham Palace.

As for Alan, yes, dear reader, I married him, but not until I met him again when we were 27, which was perfect.