

Ramblers newsletter 11 08/06/20

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 relaxed. Government rules for contact with others have recently been updated. Under the new rules: people in **England** can exercise with up to five others from different households **provided strict physical distancing** guidelines are followed. Those shielding may spend time outdoors once a day with members of their own household, or for those shielding alone, with one person from another household.

However, the advice from the Ramblers Association remains the same – “**All Ramblers group walks and activities remain suspended**”.

Whether alone, with your family or with members of another household, the Ramblers Association advise all walkers to:

1 - Be prepared

Some hotspots could be busy and facilities such as car parks, shops and especially toilets may be closed or access reduced, so plan ahead before setting out - including checking the relevant website for your destination. Some locations remain closed to visitors.

2 - Be safe

Support our NHS, emergency services and rescue teams by avoiding riskier outings and abiding by the latest guidance on hygiene and physical distancing – particularly if you meet anyone from another household.

3 - Be considerate

Be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home to walk. In many cases, the best option will be to stay local and explore the local area on foot.

A big thank you to everyone who has sent in articles about their memories of WW2 and life during the 1940's. This week's newsletter includes memories from Joyce T and Gordon G. More memories about life in the 1940's to follow in next week's newsletter. Further contributions are most welcome.

Stay Safe

Grace

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Ashdown Ramblers memories of World War2

Joyce T – memories

The train, with bewildered children, labelled and packed into carriages, leaving mothers behind trying to put on a brave face. As we reached our destination (Middleton-in-Teesdale), we were told to spit on our hankies and rub our faces clean from the steam-engine smuts. We were herded like cattle into the village hall, with residents looking us over and making their selection. I was a sensible kid and given my “orders” before leaving home, to look after my younger sister and not be separated. We went to a farm, with no comforts and no main drainage, three miles outside the village. This was my introduction to walking, three miles each way to the village school, for half a day’s schooling. The village children had the other half-day. My sister, because of her age was collected by pony and trap. Eventually we moved to the village and then back to the city (Newcastle upon Tyne) as the bombing seemed less intense.

When the bombing resumed and was getting serious, we were evacuated again to Workington, in Cumbria. The town house we stayed in was opposite the munitions factory and the man of the house was on duty every night, with the bombers trying to hit the factory, fortunately with little success. Once again I looked after my sister and always “toed the line”. I remember a picnic with great amusement, when our hostess suggested cold tea to drink, so I said “Yes”. My sister refused cold tea and was given lemonade instead.

Tough times but we took it in our stride.

Gordon G - memories

I lived in St. Albans, born just over 3 years before the start of WW2. I have no memories of the early years of the war. Not knowing anything else, to me all was normal. My brother was 4½ years older than me and would have known more about it than me.

My father was in the RAF and was 'called up' on 24 August 1939 and on 4 September 1939 sent to France, with the BEF, serving on the 'Maginot Line'. He was evacuated out at Boulogne on 25 May 1940 and sent to Abingdon Aerodrome. We joined him in Abingdon and I remember many summer days down on the river bank. This is where I learnt to swim and my brother 'dared me' for a penny, I think, to swim across the river to an island. Only being about 5 or 6 years old, I did just that. It is about 25 yards one way! The house, still there, backed onto a tannery, with a gate from the garden into the tannery yard. There were lots of wooden barrels on the site, presumably holding the 'hides', which we played on, 'jumping from barrel to barrel'. The smell was terrible! We used the tannery yard as a short cut, to get into Barton Lane and open country. One incident that I remember well, was one day, when passing the farm there was a bull and I 'refused' (afraid to pass it!) to go any further.

My father was sent to New Brunswick, Canada in December 1942, training Wireless Operators and I did not see him again until July 1945.

We returned to St Albans. I remember aircraft flying overhead, mainly bombers. We felt 'protected' in St. Albans with de Havilland Aircraft, to the east; Handley Page Aircraft to the south, and Leavesden Aerodrome to the south west. My mother would always say to us, listening to the engine noise, don't worry it's "one of ours!" Whether or not she was just trying to reassure us 'I don't know!'

We played outside in the road with our friends, including David Whitehouse. His father ran a newspaper 'distribution' business and owned a van, the only vehicle in the road. He also had a pigeon loft (racing pigeons) which we boys could go into and hold the pigeons! Further down the road lived Brian and Bruce Howard, their garden went down to the river - good fun was had in the river!

St. Peter's School memories: Teacher – Miss Hodges who taught us, (Head Teacher was Miss Bunfield), two class rooms - I think originally one big classroom, divided into two. We sat in rows; I do not remember any desks. Toilets in the playground - disgusting! During the winter - frozen milk, warmed up on the edge of the stove in the class room, warm milk - ugh! Put me off for life! Stopping to talk to Italian POW's working on the river bank. Air raid shelter, about 200 yards down the road - another disgusting place, sitting in the dank, dark place waiting for the 'all clear' to sound.

I remember one day a bomber coming in very low, with big holes in the fuselage and wings, perhaps making for Leavesden or Handley Page.

Life for us boys was 'normal' as far as we were concerned. Going down the nearby road to watch the trains go by and the signal box where the 'single line working' token was handed over. We would wander out into the countryside passing the Army (ATS) camp, which was exciting to us, as there was a searchlight and 'Ack Ack' gun right on the corner of the lane and down to the river to 'fish', paddle and generally muck about. We also used to play in the trenches which were a long way away from the main camp buildings.

I do not remember any bombing in St. Albans but Wendy would always tell us about the 'land mines' that were dropped on houses and allotments just ¼ mile from their house, demolishing a friend's house. The nearest that 'danger' got to us was, when, sometime in the late 40's early 50's, my father was painting the windows of the bedroom over the front porch and us boys climbed up the ladder onto the porch and found a shell, about 3" long embedded in the roof felt. A few feet higher and it would have gone into the bedroom where my brother slept.

We went to Watford regularly, to see my Grandma, and I do have 'vivid' memories of seeing the damage caused by a V1 'flying bomb' that killed 37 people in North Watford, injuring 64 others, and wiping out 50 homes. I remember, one evening, looking out of our back-bedroom window seeing a V1 'flying bomb' going over the town and thinking 'keep going'! When the engine 'cut' they would 'dive' to the ground. That V1 'landed' on an isolated farm house about 6 miles away.

1945 - The war in Europe finished, we had a VE party and MY DAD CAME HOME.