

## Ramblers newsletter 12 15/06/20

I hope you are all well.

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

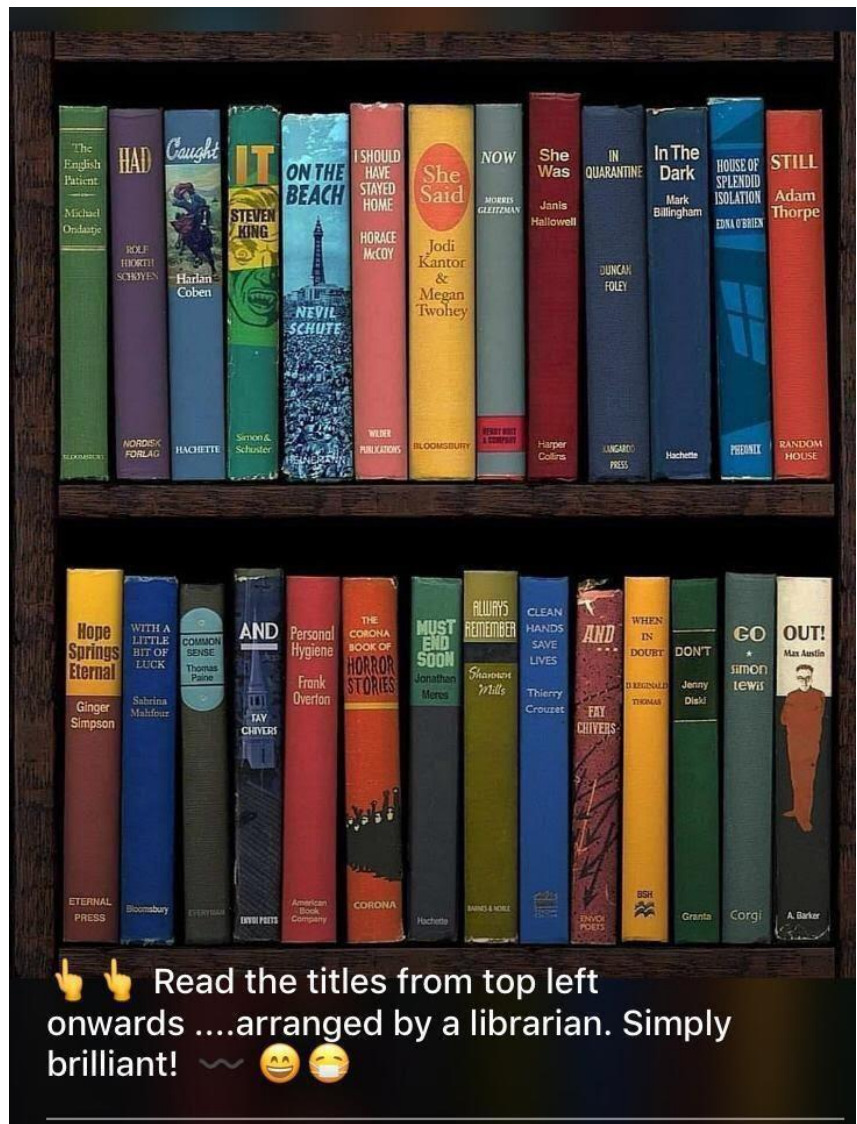
<http://www.ashdownramblers.btck.co.uk>

At long last the lock-down restrictions are being relaxed. Government rules for contact with others are being updated.

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**
- 2 - Be safe**
- 3 - Be considerate**



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 Frank B and an article written by Wendy G in 2004, kindly provided by Gordon.

The focus of next week's newsletter will be on "Lockdown" and contributions are most welcome – have you written any stories, poems or creative activities? Maybe you have been sent a story or cartoon which you would like to share.

Stay Safe

Grace

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## **Ashdown Ramblers memories of the 1940s.**

### **Frank B – Life in the 1940's**

I lived with my parents and brother in a house situated in Avery Hill Road, New Eltham, close to the Kent border. The front of the house was opposite fields and Avery Hill Park beyond. This was very large and had a collection of greenhouses and also a large domed building housing tropical plants and a water fountain. The greenhouses provided plants for the London Parks but, unfortunately, all were damaged during the war and not replaced until the late 1950s.

My brother, who was nine years older than me, was persuaded by my father to convert half of the back garden to growing vegetables to help feed the family and save using coupons from our ration books - and money. I took over in the latter part of the '40s as my brother had left school, had a job in London, and in 1946 was called up for National Service in the RAF, serving in Egypt and Cyprus.

At the bottom of the garden we had two Bramley apple trees, and every October I had to climb up to pick the apples, and where it was difficult to reach I held a fishing net under the branches and shook them to catch the apples in the net. After picking, the worst job was grading the apples; the sound ones were wrapped in newspaper and stored in large wooden boxes on the landing. These lasted throughout the winter.

Our house had two fireplaces using coal, and a solid fuel boiler for hot water, using coke. Every few weeks the coal merchant arrived with sacks full of each, weighing a hundredweight, and it was put in a double compartment coal bunker at the back of the house. Other deliveries were bread, which came by horse and cart, and churns of milk from a local farm, which was poured into containers for our needs until the next supply. Later it came in glass bottles. In the kitchen we had a pantry which extended out of the kitchen into an enclosed recess which also did duty as a fridge, though my mother had to use a stool to access the items needed for the family meals. Also in the kitchen we had a copper tank which was plugged into a power point to heat up the water ready to wash the family clothes, and every so often we had to use a long, round implement to stir the washing with soap. Mother then squeezed some of the water out into the sink before using the mangle to get more of it out. Then the ironing was done, after which the clothes were hung out to dry on the line in the garden.

Once a month the carpet or rug was put over the clothes line and hit with a carpet beater to get the dust and dirt out.

I enjoyed school apart from the disruption caused by air raid sirens.

Entertainment at home was the radio, playing cards, board games and a quarter size billiard table, and I read my comics - Beano, Dandy, Eagle and Boys' Own.

During my schooldays and all through the war the world was a very different one from today. Life was much more simple, there were no mobile telephones or computer scams, crowded roads, having to remember passwords, or pressure at work with deadlines to meet. There was a third of today's population, less crime and few traffic jams.

In that world one could safely leave the front door open, with no burglars about, even with a large unemployment situation in the country. Where I lived it was safe, with no mugging; friendly neighbours who would help out if needed.

## **THE UNWANTED PRESENT *by Wendy G (Sept 2004)***

It's not such a great idea to give children a pet unannounced - especially two rabbits! Mind you, Gill & I thought it was fantastic but for our parents it caused consternation.

How it came about was like this: Our Great Auntie Minnie, who lived with us during the war, had two old friends who lived in the tiny hamlet of Whelply Hill in Hertfordshire. Living as we did in St Albans and having to travel by bus, the journey there was, itself, a great adventure. I can still remember the route to this day, even though it is over 60 years ago. We caught a 341 bus, which ran from Hertford to Hemel Hempstead, and passed along the main road near our house. We travelled on it to the outskirts of Hemel, getting off by the bridge over the Grand Union canal. We then walked over the bridge and had to wait for the 'Red Rover', a single decker bus that toured the villages around there. There was always a bit of panic when it came near to our stop, as it was a 'request' stop. One had to be pretty quick to jump up and ring the bell at the right time! We then had to walk down a footpath – always referred to as the 'green lane'. At last this brought us to our destination – just a walk up the lane to the cottage.

Now this cottage too, was a delight to us girls. The floor was flagstoned - no damp course, and there were no drains either. Woe betide you if you forgot to empty the bucket under the sink after pulling out the plug! The toilet, needless to say, was in a small shed at the bottom of the garden. Just a seat over a bucket with lots of spiders for company - ugh. Our visits there were always short and sharp! One delight was that the garden backed onto Bovingdon aerodrome, manned by the USAAF during the war. George, whom the Twydels had befriended, was a great source of chocolate - what a treat for us to anticipate during wartime rationing. One day George was not there - he had not returned from a mission over Europe!

Mr Twydel (Twidell) raised rabbits for the pot and kept them in a large hutch down the garden. On this special trip, he proudly presented Gill & I with one each. For me, there was a large Ginger male and for Gill, a small grey doe. We were enraptured! However, whatever Auntie had to say about this gift was not recorded on my memory tape and how on earth we managed to get them home is a mystery. At 6 years old, such details were unimportant!

The trouble started on our arrival home. Mum could see how happy we girls were but couldn't think where we could keep them - in the immediate future at least. However, somehow Dad managed to knock something up temporarily and made a great hutch over the weekend. It had three cages, I recall, one on top of the other. One for each rabbit (no offspring required thanks!) and one spare for when we cleaned them out.

However, that wasn't empty for long. One day a small boy appeared on our doorstep clutching a large ginger rabbit in his arms. "Is this you rabbit?" he enquired. It certainly looked like my Ginger but I ran up the garden to check – no, Ginger was safely in his hutch, munching happily no doubt. However, we took pity on the boy's family and popped Ginger 2 in our spare hutch. What a mistake! It wasn't long before this 'Houdini' managed to chew his way out of his hutch and go off on the rampage up and down the street – night after night. Amazingly though, he always returned home and would be sitting outside his hutch in the morning waiting for his breakfast of raw porridge mixed with cold tea leaves, left over from our breakfast cuppa. However, before we fell out with all our neighbours, poor old Ginger 2 was hung, drawn and quartered. I ate him quite happily but my sisters sat at the table crying their eyes out and made it quite clear they thought me an unfeeling little brat!

(Gordon addendum: I often wonder if by any chance if my mother and I travelled on the same buses as Wendy and her sister.)