

Ramblers newsletter8 18/05/20

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/>

Several members have asked about the next walk program. At the moment there are no plans to do anything about a walks programme until both the Government and the Ramblers give the OK for normal walking. The biggest issue is going to be social distancing during the walk and transport to the start of the walk.

There is no quiz this week as I am still looking for volunteers to write one! I have been busy cutting, sewing, washing & pressing face masks for social and care workers. Instead of a quiz there is a competition: Guess how many masks I have made this week, as shown in the photo. The prize for the first correct entry sent to me is one of my designer masks!



Thank you to Frank B for sending his memories about WWII and the following suggestion: quite a few of our members are now in their 80's and a good topic to fill the time might be to write up their memories about life in the 1940s. The world was so different from today, as we did not have all the modern implements and technology: no supermarkets, microwaves, mobile phones, computers, Internet, etc. Maybe some of you would like to write a short piece about where you lived, life during those times and if you were evacuated. The article does not have to be typed – hand-written is fine and I can scan it or type it for you.

Stay Safe

Grace

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Frank B WWII memories

During the Second World War I lived with my parents and brother in South East London, in a small town called New Eltham. This happened to be under the flight path of the German bombers and V2 rockets, and only 10 miles, as the crow flies, from Biggin Hill fighter station where Spitfires were based in order to intercept the Germans before reaching London. My father was working for the Port of London Authority, in the office nearby to where the docks were situated - a target for the Germans.

My mother was obviously very worried during this period, but fortunately we survived it to see VE Day. Our house was affected by bomb blast many times, triggering off fallen roof tiles, and plaster ceilings falling down into the rooms upstairs. I was delegated to catch the rainwater coming through the roof, in buckets and saucepans, etc., and to empty them into the garden. It took a long time to get repairs done.

The nearest bomb landed only 100 yards away and destroyed a house, but fortunately it was during the daytime and just one person was killed. I used to go into the back garden to pick up shrapnel embedded in the lawn.

Night times were the worst as the flying bombs (V2 rockets) came over, and when the engines stopped we didn't know if it was coming down overhead or would land in the fields in front of our house. Fortunately, most landed away from the house and created large craters which my school friends and I went to explore.

I attended the local school from the age of 5, and many times when the air raid siren was set off we hurried into the basement of the school until the all-clear siren sounded. This disrupted our education, but the school escaped any damage from the war.

At home we had a Morrison shelter built in the back ground floor room overlooking the garden. This room had French windows, and one day when the air raid siren sounded we entered the shelter and a bomb nearby blasted our French windows and shot splinters of glass across the room and embedded them in the walls opposite. We were thankful we had been in the shelter and it probably saved our lives.

In our front garden we had an iron railing dividing the semi-detached houses, and one day the authorities came to take it away to help the war effort and it was never replaced.

We saw many air battles between our fighter planes and the Germans during the daylight hours, but the worst time was at night, when we didn't know if our house would be struck, and I would get under the bedclothes for shelter and put my hands over my ears to shut out the noise.

Our family survived the war, and on VE Day we hung a huge Union Jack flag on a pole over the porch of the house. We gathered with many people in our road to celebrate by sitting at tables piled with food, singing and dancing till late in the night.

On reaching the age of 80 I lived a boyhood dream by going up in a Spitfire from Biggin Hill which had seen action during the war, and I was piloted by a Canadian pilot who shot down a Messerschmitt over Arnhem in Belgium.