

## **Ramblers newsletter9 25/05/20**

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/>

The answer to “Guess how many masks I have made this week” competition was 40. As there were only 3 entries, (Pat J, Nicola K, Jenny F) I have decided to give all 3 one of my “designer masks”.

A big thank you to everyone who sent in articles, about their memories of WW2 and life during the 1940's. To date, I have received 11 articles, which make fascinating reading. Some of them are a page or more long and so publication will be split between the next few newsletters. Please see following memories from Peter F, Ron P, Pat J, Joyce B and Lyn S.

Stay Safe

Grace

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## **Ashdown Ramblers memories of World War2**

### **Peter F – memories**

I remember very clearly the radio broadcast by Neville Chamberlain on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 when he said that we were at war with Germany. I was 14 years old at the time and living with my grandparents in Wallington, Surrey. My father and mother were based in Shanghai, China as my father was a marine engineer and most of his working life was spent at sea.

My aunt & uncle lived in Ashted, Surrey and they suggested that we should move in with them as being a safer location (little did we know). I had been at school in Croydon but arrangements were made for me to attend school in Dorking. There was no bus service but I was able to cycle there for my lessons on a daily basis. It was a co-educational school which was rather unusual at the time.

At the weekends I helped my aunt & uncle with erecting the bomb shelter at the bottom of their garden. Not long after we had completed the work the German air raids started and for some reason they dropped many incendiary bombs, which we became quite expert at dealing with by emptying earth on them on the ground.

I remember that potatoes formed a large part of our diet supplemented by sausages and meat when available using our ration books. Occasionally whale meat became available but it was not to my liking, as it had a very fishy smell & taste.

Yet in spite of the fact that we were at war, we enjoyed a happy time for the next few years.

### **Ron P – memories**

I was eight years old when war broke out. Living with my parents, sisters, and brother on Furzefield Road, Baldwins Hill.

My school was Baldwins Hill Primary and I have memories of taking lessons in the air-raid shelters built in the playground.

When I reached eleven, I moved on to Lingfield Central Secondary School.

The 9<sup>th</sup> February 1943 was a bleak grey day and as usual the local pupils gathered on the corner of Lowdels Lane, to wait for the school coach. About 8.30am the Air Raid Siren sounded and within minutes there was the sound of exploding bombs. Then the sound of a German Bomber flying over, above the cloud. Soon the coach arrived and we started our journey to Lingfield via. Felcourt and Dormans.

As we arrived in Lingfield we met another coach leaving, still full of pupils, Our drivers had a conversation and then told us we would be taken home again, as the school had received a direct hit. The Dormans children were told to walk home and the rest of us went home via Felcourt.

We could not go back to Lingfield for the time being, so we had to return to the Primary School and were all taught in one classroom, 11yr to 15yr by one Teacher (Mr Tanner.)

After several months we returned to Lingfield to find that over half the school had been destroyed by the bomb and that we had lost two pupils and three members of staff, killed in the blast. I hate to think what the death toll would have been if it had happened half an hour later, maybe I would not be here to tell the tale.

To make up for the shortage of classrooms, we were also taught in a Manor House, at the bottom of Jacks Bridge Hill and in the Methodist Church.

It was believed at the time that there had been another bomb which had failed to explode but it was not found and was forgotten, but in January 2002, when building an extension on a house in Mount Pleasant Road, the builders found it when digging the foundations.

### **Pat J - Memories**

I was born in 1940. My first memory was of being in the cupboard under the stairs with my grandmother and mother. It was crowded and dark and we called it the gun cupboard because we sheltered from the 'guns' there. After that, we had a concrete air raid shelter built at the end of the small back garden and used to sleep there. Lucky we did because my second memory is coming out of there in the morning, looking down at my feet and seeing the front door from the house lying there in the back garden, which didn't seem right. We had been bombed and the house was pretty near gone. At least nobody is dropping bombs during the coronavirus!

### **Joyce B - Memories**

I was born the week that War was declared, at home in the upstairs bedroom. Home was just 15 minutes from the Cammel Laird Ship Yard and from the top window you could get a good view of the Mersey River, Liverpool Basin and the ships going in and out. Ship builders and seamen were our neighbours, so everyone was involved.

Living at this location you can imagine how important it was not only to us but also to the enemy! We were hit by bombs, air attacks as they came in, or dropping bombs on their way home to Germany.

My big sister and twin Brothers were evacuated to North Wales as soon as the government order came out. Mum decided to go home to her mother and father, taking me with her as a baby in a pram with a Donald duck gas mask and a large cardboard case with all our clothes etc. We took the steam train to Bangor, then a bus to Llanrug (which is at the bottom of Snowdon), to our Grannie and Grandad's house.

Life here was very different to back home it was peaceful. Dad and my other big sister had stayed behind but we were safe at last. However, as it turned out, not for long. Christmas of that year came around and Mum was back home again with all of us, not wanting to be separated from her family.

We were back to the bombing, the airships, the fires and the air raids night and day.

In the New Year I caught Diphtheria and was put in isolation at the local hospital and nobody could visit me. When I came home, we had moved house a little further away from the ship yards and that is where we lived till well after the war.

### **Lyn S - Memories**

My father was Canadian. In March 1945, when I was three and a half, my mother took me and my younger brother to Canada. We were to stay with my father's parents until Dad returned from the war.

I don't remember anything about the sea voyage. The war in Europe was still on, so it must have been a bit dangerous. When we docked in Canada we had to take a long train journey to Toronto. During the train journey we were given a meal. At the end of the meal a banana was put on my plate. I had never seen one before, so, not knowing how to eat it, I picked up my knife and fork and tried to eat the banana, skin and all! Thereafter I discovered a lot of food, especially fruit, which I had never had.

One day, whilst we were still staying with our grandparents, my Granny took me to an ice cream parlour. I didn't like this cold dessert at all. Every time we went there the owners used to ask me if I liked ice cream yet. It took me a long time to get the taste for it, but I have definitely made up for it since!!