

## Newsletter No.73 November 2020

### Remembrance Day edition.

The first week of November has already been eventful with a new lockdown and Joe Biden the new President elect of the USA, well we think so! Donald however is not quite so keen to leave! Just a couple of news items to report before you can start reading the interesting and often moving stories from our members. A poignant reminder of what was given to us and our debt to the fallen.

### Members' Survey-

You will shortly receive a survey which the Committee has put together to help us plan for the next few months, as we anticipate that restrictions on our activities due to Covid will continue. We aim to maximise access for members to U3A activities and events as far as possible and your views of how we can do this are very important. Please complete the survey even if you are not joining in any activities or online events at the moment. It will only take you a few minutes and is easy to do.

Our convenors, who as you know are all volunteers have been very creative in adapting to the "new normal" and we are also asking them to give us feedback and suggestions for the way forward.

A reminder of our monthly meeting on 11 November at 2pm and the login details have been sent out. Susie Weisz forwarded some information from Misbourne Matins Rotary Club as they are presenting 'A Zoom Safari on 20 November at 8pm. Details on our website.

David and Megan Brodie would like to offer any assistance during this phase of lockdown when you may be housebound. If you are struggling to get medicines, essential shopping, emergency services or the like, do ring and they will try their best to help. If you are simply fed up or lonely, just ring for a chat. Phone 01753 890301 and leave a clear message if they are not at home.

Existing Groups The Computing Group meeting will be held via Zoom on 19 Nov at 2pm. They will explore what has happened in technology in the past six months and its affects. There will be an opportunity to look at any issues you may be having via the remote- control feature.

### Members' Musings

The first piece called 'A single leaf falls' was written by one of our members to reflect on the many lives lost in conflict. You may wish to use it in silent, reverent memory of the fallen over the years."

#### **A Single Leaf Falls.**

A group of walkers, near Verdun, paused for a couple of minutes.

As they gathered under a magnificent chestnut tree, a single leaf fell from its upper branches.

It took several seconds to whirl and twirl as it fell, but eventually it settled on the ground to join the countless others in vivid shades of red, orange, and brown.

It fell on the spot where many had fallen before.

It was the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

Little over a hundred years before, nearly three quarters of a million French and German soldiers had died in one of the fiercest and costly battles of the war to end all wars.

All those years before, one leaf from the self-same chestnut tree, then a mere sapling, had fallen on Corporal Alain Castan.

His grandson, his once flame hair now receding, was in that group of walkers.

He never knew where his grandfather had fallen.

But the chestnut tree knew.

Faithfully it marked the spot. Year after year.

The group of walkers raised their bowed heads and moved on in thoughtful silence.

The tree remained. It would never forget.



## **Eileen Turnham- Remembrance Day Ceremony in France 2009.**

As the result of a DNA sample I was asked to provide, my uncle's body (Mother's brother) was identified from a mass grave in Fromelles, France in 2009. I subsequently was invited to attend the Memorial Service held in Fromelles where his body was given a proper burial in a known grave at the War Graves Cemetery which had recently been constructed. 10 of my family managed to attend and after the ceremony we had a short service at his graveside. It was a memorable day which I shall always remember and after the ceremony some of us were invited to meet the V I Ps who attended and I chatted to Prince Charles!. All of us were sent a DVD of the day and a letter of thanks.

## **Bloody Belgium By Denise Beddows.**

Michael Carter had always longed to visit Belgium. Since infancy, he had been curious about the place. It was a natural longing, since his mother had been born and raised in Liège. Marie-Louise had been in service there before coming to England to empty the ashes from English fire grates, just as she had done from Belgian ones. Ashes were no different in Liège than they were in London, she would tell him whenever he asked her about Belgium, though he knew from the faraway look in her eye that she missed her homeland dearly.

Michael's mother being Belgian was the reason his sister Johanna had an 'h' in her name. It was the Flemish way, and Marie-Louise had got her way when she had persuaded her English husband to let her give their first-born a Belgian name. Marie-Louise's own father had been Flemish and her mother a Walloon. Michael, therefore, was to have been Michel, in the Walloon style, but Mr Carter would not permit it. He wanted his son to be an Englishman through and through. Michael had often thought the course of his life might have been very different had he been a Michel instead of a Michael. On reflection, however, perhaps his father had been right. Perhaps his schooldays might have been even more difficult had he been given a name that sounded like a girl's.

One of the very few things his mother had brought with her from Liège had been an old, blackened waffle iron. Michael and his sister adored the waffles which were just an occasional but most welcome treat. It had always excited the young Michael to see his mother pour the thick batter into the iron, close it up and hold it over the gas ring. The warm, yeasty aroma would fill the kitchen and soon the buttered waffles and jam would fill their bellies. Michael was convinced that, had they grown up in Belgium, they would have had waffles for breakfast every day of their young lives.

"Bloody Belgium!" Michael's father had often pronounced. "What's so great about it? In fact, there's absolutely no reason for Belgium."

Mr Carter would then expand on his theory that there was no reason at all for Belgium to exist, since it was a bastard nation which could not make its mind up whether it were Dutch or French. Johanna would laugh at this absurdity, but Michael alone could see how such comment hurt his quiet and careworn mother.

Marie-Louise had been a beautiful woman. She could speak three languages fluently. In another place, another time, she might have aspired to training as a language teacher, but, as the daughter of peasant farmers, her opportunities had been limited. Her sensitive and loving boy had promised her that, when he grew up and earned money, he would take her to visit Belgium. He would buy her a green silk dress with a collar of Brussels lace, and a fine hat adorned with peacock feathers, one which she would wear as they sat and sipped thick hot chocolate in the mirrored interior of an elegant city café. They would walk along the promenade at fashionable De Hahn and passing ladies would cast envious glances at Marie-Louise's hat.



## **Recollections of WWII. by Leonard (Andy) Capp**

I was 10 when war broke out, living in a top floor council flat in Waterloo with my mother and 13-year old brother. Our Dad died just after my first birthday. Like most children in London, we were evacuated – my brother to Newton Abbott and me to Weymouth as we attended different schools.

Weymouth seemed a strange choice being next door to Portland Harbour and the torpedo works. Weymouth Bay became the home to “contraband shipping” – ships passing through the Channel that were searched for German war supplies. However, the Luftwaffe bombed them almost daily as presumably they didn’t want the cargo in British hands.

On one of my frequent crab fishing trips to the harbour with my hi-tech fishing gear – a mussel tied to a length of string – I saw lots of men sitting with their backs to the harbour wall. Some were wearing British army uniforms, others French, some were even civilians. They all looked unkempt and exhausted. Looking back, I realised they had fled the German occupation of the Channel Islands.

After a few months, my mother came to see me and on the way from the coach station the air raid siren sounded, and my mother was able to see – what was a familiar sight to me – an aerial dogfight! She was naturally alarmed and, as the London blitz had not started, she considered Weymouth much too dangerous for her little boy, so she took me home.

Soon after I returned to London the air raids started. The ground floor occupants of our flats had been rehoused and the vacant area had been reinforced and a sandbagged wall erected in front. Inside, there were bunkbeds for us to sleep during when raids. On mornings after a raid, and before going to school my mates and I would go looking for bits of shrapnel, mostly from gunfire. One time I returned home from collecting and sitting in the warmth of the kitchen, my shoes began to smoulder. I had obviously trodden in the residue of a phosphorous bomb!

On Sunday mornings I regularly visited an aunt who lived a couple of miles away. One morning, I saw only a pile of rubble, the house had received a direct hit. It was not easy to establish the fate of my relatives, but they had been in the Anderson shelter in the garden and escaped unharmed.

I was fortunate to pass the Junior County Scholarship, forerunner of the 11 plus, and joined Archbishop Tenisons Grammar School which had evacuated to Reading. The junior school was in a splendid large, thatched roof manor house called South Lake at nearby Woodley. It was owned by and lent to us by Lord Delaware, a government minister. The grounds were enormous with a large lake. Some years later I found the house to show my wife. The grounds were now a massive housing estate and the impressive house a pub called The Thatched Inn. We went in and I had the pleasure of drinking a pint of ale in my classroom without the fear of six of the best!

Aged 13, as the raids had finished, I returned to London and joined the South Emergency Secondary School, for non-evacuated grammar schoolboys, in the premises of Alleyns School at Dulwich where I stayed until the end of the war, aged 16. The war ended three months before I was due to leave school so I was given the choice of either going back to Tenisons or staying at Alleyns. I chose the latter and did not regret it as when seeking employment, I was able to say I had received a public-school education! Not bad for a South London street kid!

Looking back on my childhood, I realised how much I owed to a wonderful mother who devoted her life to her two sons. I can only imagine her anxieties when her boys were sent away to an unknown destination with no knowledge of how they would be cared for by strangers. Nearly all the boys where I lived left school aged 14 and started earning money for the family. My widowed mother would have needed the income more than most, but she kept me at school until 16, so I was able to apply for better jobs and pursue a decent career.



**Janet Taylor.**

My Grandmother had six sons, they all served in the war, in the army, navy, and airforce  
Luckily, they all returned home, one even brought home a German girl, which didn't go down well at all! He later married her! She was also 15 years older with two teenagers, who came over from Germany later.

I was born 11 o'clock on the 11th November. My mother lived in London, so to have me she was sent to Buckinghamshire, because it was considered to be safer. Funny that I live so close to where I was born.

**Life is a Dance. written by 16 year old Lara Tattersall for her grandmother Ann White**

When I was young  
I danced for fun  
Swinging feet I hopped and spun  
As I grew I danced for praise  
Flitting legs and twist amaze  
When we met I danced for joy  
Every move I did employ  
Until the day we danced in white  
With music playing through the night  
As we aged we danced at home  
To records spin and covers thrown  
We danced and danced our hearts intertwined  
Perfect partners souls aligned  
We danced and synced to life and sound  
Until the silence gathered round  
Now we dance in glowing space  
Between the stars with practised grace  
My love, my life, my greatest friend  
Dance with me until the end.

**Eric Price.**

On reflection, it seems remarkable the amount of freedom we children had once outside our homes! We often used to visit the make-shift American army camp in nearby Frogmore Woods and enjoyed listening to the jazz records they played there. They were very friendly and I think many were missing their own children left at home. Then one day, the camp was deserted with no one in sight. This was just a day or two before the D-day landing in Normandy under "Operation Overlord". I often wonder how many of those guys managed to survive the war, as without exception they seemed a great bunch of fellows. Then, shortly afterwards, the camp was again occupied; this time by Italians who, until a few weeks before, had been prisoners of war but who, as a result of Italy switching sides after the Allied invasion had now become our Allies! They too were nice people and there was always music in the camp. How they had managed to acquire musical instruments puzzled me. It disturbed me greatly to realise that had I been, say ten years older and had it been a few months' earlier, I might have been fighting such fine people. If so, I still ask myself, would I really have pulled the trigger?

**Lesley Pease.**

During WW11 my mother and I lived at Runnymede with my grandmother, my father being in the RAF. My grandmother's bungalow was built up on stilts out of reach of the Thames flooding (though the waters later invaded the property in 1947).

We had a large garden and when a group of Canadian servicemen illegally "borrowed" our punt, my mother invited them to help her with heavy digging to make amends. They gave her rationing coupons and she cooked delicious Sunday lunches for them; they responded enthusiastically by digging out all the flowers and leaving the weeds. I think their cheerful company made up for their crimes!



### **Anon.**

When we moved to this part of the Chilterns in 1972 I was surprised when my mother told me that my grandparents had been the licensees of the Saracens Head in Whielden Street, Amersham where the family lived from 1910 until 1921. My grandfather was a wine merchant who had been advised to seek country air for health reasons. My mother's elder brother had joined the London Rifles in 1914 and sadly lost his life aged 20 in September 1916 at the Battle of High Wood - one of the major conflicts of the Somme. We visited High Wood with a grandchild working on a WW1 centenary school project in 2018 and compared the desolation of battlefield photos with the dense woodland of today. Some 4000 casualties of the battle, the majority unidentified, lie in the adjacent beautifully maintained London War Cemetery. My uncle's name appears on the War Memorial in the gardens next to St Mary's Parish Church, Amersham and when one of our sons attended Dr Challoner's school we were surprised to find that my uncle had been a former pupil as his name was on a memorial plaque there too. We all have a lot to be thankful for, even in lockdown.

### **Val Isaacs.**

I was born in 1942 during World War 11 in Staffordshire in the heart of the heavy industrial area of the UK. My father could not join the forces as he worked in steel which was a reserved occupation. My mother told me this upset him greatly, so after a long day at the factory he would have a quick bite to eat then do a firefighting shift into the small hours! Incendiaries would rain down on factories and houses which my father and his colleagues risked life and limb to extinguish and make safe.

My paternal grandfather was at Dunkirk with the Army. He was invalided out as he was injured by shrapnel which was buried in his skull. Hospital surgeons inserted a silver plate there to repair the injury and it stayed with him for the rest of his life!

I also had a cousin who flew Lancaster bombers over enemy lines and won the DFC and Bar twice!

**From Ron McCaskie.** I attach a transcript of a letter written by my Grandfather James Downie, from the trenches (he was in the Somme) in February 1918, to Maggie Stewart who became my Grandmother. My grandparents came from rural Aberdeenshire and at the time James wrote the letter, Maggie was working in London and she experienced Zeppelin bombing raids. My Grandfather refers to Charlie who was his younger brother. Charlie was in Gallipoli as well as France. I think the letter (I have the original) gives an interesting and personal insight into life in the trenches during the winter months. I have many happy childhood memories of time spent with my grandparents

### **24.2.1918**

Dear Maggie, No doubt you will be surprised to see my handwriting or do you still recognise it. I trust you will not be offended at me for writing to you but chanced to hear through home letters of your whereabouts & address & not having anything in particular to do meantime thought I would write you a few lines. I trust you like life in London better than that of the North. Tis a gie cold bare country up bye & were it not just always the home country it has few other attractions. Well I am pleased to say I still keep safe & well. I have been very lucky up to date & trust for the home folks sake that my luck will always continue.

Charlie was in hospital sick when last I heard from him but no doubt by this he will have rejoined his Company & is up the line again. He expects to be home on or about March or April so I hope his luck keeps in until then. Probably you will have heard through home news that I was home end of last year end of November to be exact. Did not see much of the Slains folk, the weather was beastly bad so did little or no visiting. But still was good to be in Blighty again no matter how short the spell away from the sights & monotony of trench warfare. I have never been lucky enough to come across Charlie one could be out here a hundred years & never meet each other. However my luck may be in some day. Meantime we are having quite good weather here which is always something to be thankful for, for you can imagine it's no pleasure plodding on amongst the mud & there can be some mud here. Even Auchnaber old road in the dead of winter is nothing to it. Well I will close meantime. Trusting that you will not be offended at me writing. Just thought I would send a few lines for old times' sake. Should you at any time find time to write me please do so all home letters are welcome out here. Yours Sincerely, J Downie





### **The sinking of HMS Glorious, HMS Ardent and HMS Acasta. Cecilia Winkett.**

In May 2017 Bryan and I fulfilled a long-held ambition to take a Hurtigruten Cruise up the coast of Norway. There were many memorable moments but one that had a profound effect on me was a visit to a small church in Trondenes – well above the Arctic Circle. We visited on a Sunday and the pony-tailed pastor conducted a short ecumenical service in English, Norwegian, German, and French – slipping between languages effortlessly.

In the churchyard is a memorial, in English and Norwegian, to the sailors from HMS Glorious, an aircraft carrier and HMS Ardent and HMS Acasta, her escorts. All three ships were attacked on 8 June 1940 in the North Atlantic near the town and 1531 sailors were lost. The majority of them were very young - in their teens and early 20s. I found it very moving to read about them – very few members of the crews were picked up by Norwegian fishermen. Although the weather that day in 2017 was bright and sunny, it was still cold and to think of all those young men struggling in the freezing water was heart-breaking. The reason that the memorial sticks in my mind is that the sinking took place on my birthday. A photograph of the memorial, taken by Peter Ashton, can be found on the 'ipernity' site.

### **VE Day 1945 Pam Rich.**

We lived in Wembley during WW11. When victory was announced, of course we wanted to join in the celebrations. I was nearly 11 years old and my sister was 9. My parents decided to go into London on the Tube and visit my mother's best friend, "Auntie Winks". She lived in a flat which was fairly central in London and was on the 3rd floor and boasted a balcony.

The train was suffocatingly jam packed with people with the same idea but we made it! Yes, we had a magnificent view of the cheering crowds and the processions of army vehicles and soldiers and more. However, when it came to returning home, my father put his foot hard down. He couldn't face the Tube again and I don't blame him. We spent the night sleeping (or trying to sleep!) on Winks's hard floor, then, bleary-eyed, returned home the next day. A crazy adventure but very well worth it!

### **Marion Challis-warren.**

My husband Bill's dad was blinded by mustard gas in the First World War. He survived in spite of damaged lungs and was sent to St.Dunstons to train as a basket maker, eventually making items for sale in his shed. He played cribbage at the local British Legion and Bill used to take him so as he could socialise! He died when Bill was 17 so he had a few more precious years !!

My mum's 4 brothers joined up and all came home. However one brother Jack, lost an arm to a sniper but he didn't let the loss stop him digging his garden and living a fairly normal life.

### **Ruth Corner.**

St. Peter Players were privileged and honoured to perform 'The Accrington Pals' In 2014 -a wonderful tribute to the 100 year anniversary of the start of the First World War.

This play was written and based on the true story of Accrington, Lancashire.

In the early months of the War Kitchener called for whole villages and towns to volunteer their men/boys to join his armies and all of the men from Accrington went, leaving the women to take over all the work, sadly very few if any returned to Accrington after the famous battle of the Somme. We enhanced our production by adding war time songs during each scene change. We also got advice and involved the local St Peter British Legion. We were grateful for their help and support and were able to make a worthy donation to them. We all felt a great satisfaction in keeping history alive and remembering that town, who lost all its menfolk so tragically fighting for our Country. Ruth forwarded some photos which Gary Tomlin has put on our website so please enjoy them.



### **8.11.12 Sheila Ross** writes about **Grandpa Jack Allan** .

Jack Allan was such fun, laughed readily and often with eyes a-twinkling. His red hair designated his lively personality. In 1914, he was in France in the stinking trenches. I expect he made the most of things and kept the others as happy as possible in the utterly living Hell of a War. The Great War. No war was ever great. This one rendered my Grandpa helplessly gasping for breath. The mustard gas was so insidious, it forced itself deeply down into his lungs. Even breathing was impossible. Bronchial asthma for life he was stuck with – for doing his best for Appleby and his Country. Some sacrifice.

You just opened the door as a child to 32, Clifford Street, and met the ginormous grin, hitting you head-on.

“Let’s get the cards out, Sheila. ”So we did. I learned Pelmanism, Switch, Whist, Newmarket, and Slippery Anne. What fun a visit was. Always ended up with a few pennies, - mostly half-pennies, or even farthings. He had nothing really. But, he had everything. Fun, interested, interesting, curious, encouraging; he liked the constant challenge, making the most of it all. Oh, Yes – my memory of him as always making the most if it all. What a man.

### **Trevor Kent.**

After Anthony Eden’s call for men to enroll in a Local Defence Force at the beginning of the war, local Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter residents queued up outside Chalfont House in Chalfont Park almost immediately. From these and others across South Bucks was formed 3 Platoon of C Company of the 5th Bucks Battalion Home Guard. The Platoon’s HQ was in Beaconsfield, and the Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter squads set up home in the stables of Chalfont Park.

In their early days, the LDF, as they were first known, had little more than armbands and few weapons, indeed a Mr Eardley-Wilmott, who lived at the end of Bull Lane where it meets the Oxford Road, in a house and farm known as Raylands Mead, was an unofficial armourer, making half a dozen or so of his own gun collection available to the Chalfont squad. Later they received a delivery of American .300 rifles and machine guns (these had to be boldly marked with red paint bands to stop troops trying to use English .303 rounds in them, which would cause severe problems!). Sergeants eventually got Sten guns, which were highly prized and jealously guarded.

Later, an official armourer to the local platoon was appointed, namely George Taylor who had Taylors Garage opposite The Bull (you probably get your petrol and sandwiches in its successor today!). He had WW1 experience with ordnance and a heavily protected Nissen hut was built at the bottom of his workshop where ammunition and heavier mortars etc were stored and maintained. There was an anti-aircraft gun emplacement on the edge of the common opposite The Bull.

There were a number of small bore rifle ranges in the area for training, including one opposite the end of Oval Way, another at Eaglehust, Orchehill Avenue, and heavier training with live full bore ammunition mortars and hand grenades was to be heard regularly in the gravel pits by The Bell House Hotel (now the Crown Plaza of course). There was another well used range in Hedgerley Park.

At The Bell House Hotel , there was a removable road block close by on the A40 comprising a massive tree trunk secured at one end with a swivel pole and the other end mounted on a cartwheel, allowing it to be quickly rolled across the road. There were similar blocks just to the East of The French Horn (now a nursing home), another down Red Hill at Denham and also one in Windsor Road. Conical base concrete bollards were also produced in great number. With a hole in the centre of the top, the insertion of a pole allowed two men to roll them easily into the road. Some can still be seen in Maltmans Lane today but avoid 4pm schooldays should you wish to inspect!.

Remembrance Day will be very different this year sadly, and we shall have to each conduct our own moment of reflection, perhaps from our doorsteps. Hopefully the traditional ‘maroon’ will still be fired from Gold Hill Common, poignant in that much local training was carried out on the common by our own Home Guard. To paraphrase a well know WW1 epithet, one could say of our gallant 17-year olds and over 40’s - ‘they also served who only sit and wait’



## David Liston.

My dad, Harold George Liston, served with the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment during the World War 1, but he wouldn't speak about his experiences. I believe the troops were told that when they came home, they should not tell their friends and loved ones about the war. Dad always did what he was told. He made some references to driving a truck in the North African desert, where they had to move quickly, so stopping to brew a cup of tea meant that he had to drink it scalding hot. Dad could always drink very hot tea.

But the only war action that he told us about, and that was very little, was that he was at Kohima in Burma with General Slim's 'forgotten army'. Even details on that episode were very sparse, until he was close to the end of his life in a hospice.

Throughout the war, Dad was a private in the army, but in Burma they moved him from the front line to the Intelligence Corps and promoted him to Lance Corporal. When the battle took place over the Governor's tennis court, he lost most of his friends. He would have died in that battle were it not for his 'promotion'.

Dad never spoke about this until he was near the end of his life. He didn't talk about it, but the story came out as his nightmares reached the surface. I am sure that many service people did not tell their sons and daughters their stories, but that does not belittle their actions. What they did for us is beyond measure, and we should not forget that.

## Andrew Scott-Priestly.

My brother reminded me that today, 6 November 2020, was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our father's arrival in Portsmouth aboard the cruiser HMS Enterprise upon his return from service in the Far East during WWII. Our father enlisted in the RN in 1941 when he was at Cambridge. He initially served on North Atlantic convoys before being sent for officer training, he received his commission in 1942 and volunteered for Special Operations – he was trained as a frogman by Lt Cdr Lionel "Buster" Crabb and served in the Mediterranean and North Africa theatres. In late 1944 he was assigned to the newly formed Special Operations Group which had been formed by Louis Mountbatten in the Far East and which was commanded by Col H Tollemache RM with Lt Col "Blondie" Hasler RM (of Cockleshell Heroes fame) as his deputy.

The SOG was involved in covert operations such as recce up the various creeks in Burma, capture of key Japanese personnel for interrogation, beach clearance before landings, bomb disposal and other secret missions. The SOG included personnel from the RN and Commonwealth Navies as well as the embryonic SBS of the Royal Marines.

We are fortunate to have our father's 1945 diary which records daily his activities in India, Burma, and Ceylon – a fascinating record of the highs and lows of his own experiences. Highs such as fishing using high explosives and lows such as suffering jungle sores!!

His last mission before the end of the war was to be taken by submarine on 8 August to recce an area near to Penang. He swam ashore on 11 August to recce the area, found mines, lots of obstacles, and whilst hiding heard Japanese sentries conversing. Rendezvous with submarine after midnight on 12 August for return to Rangoon.

Arrived Rangoon on 15 August and his diary entry reads:

**'Arrived Rangoon and found it VJ Day. Just CANNOT believe it, thought they were miles from surrendering. British, Indians, Chinese and Burmese linking arms and capering about. The news has made me feel hit between the eyes and dazed. No, I can't believe it. Handed the reports to Naval Intelligence – they didn't seem v interested!! Reaction and weariness have set in'**





### **Diana Sankey.**

The news of the end of World War 11 came through on my 9<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party. I can still remember the wonderful feeling .We lived in Maidenhead but still slept in the dugout shelter. I have two vivid memories; one was a night when we had a particularly bad air raid, listening for the Doodlebugs and Mum holding up an eiderdown to save glass falling on us and also giving us milk and biscuits. I apparently enjoyed the midnight feast because according to Mum when with relief the all clear sounded I said, "That was fun I hope they come back tomorrow night"! The other was when chocolate came off rationing and Mum was excited and gave Jo my sister and I money to get chocolate but I wouldn't go. I just couldn't understand how you could buy chocolate with coupons!

### **Pat Fleet.**

When I was 8 or 9 years old and World War11 had just started I lived in the outskirts of Southampton. In due course we all received our Anderson shelters and we children slept in it every night.

One night I vividly remember my father waking me and my brothers and telling us to get up and look outside. We were met by the horizon being a wall of fire - it was Southampton- its' docks and environs ablaze. I will remember that picture forever!

So many people packed up and left for the surrounding countryside but my father would not move. His maxim was 'when our time is up we will be here to meet it'. There is a photo on our website of one of these shelters.

### **Brenda O'Gorman.**

I was one of eleven children, nine born during wartime. My father was a Regimental Sergeant Major in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and when war broke out his job was to train the new recruits. We lived in the suburbs of Birmingham and there was a munitions factory about five miles away. I remember my mother building the fire in the living room and the radio was on. A man by the name of William Joyce, (Lord Haw Haw) was speaking; he was an American born British fascist politician and broadcast Nazi propoganda from Germany ,making predictions of German bombings .He said Booths Kitts Green will be bombed tonight and as Booths was the factory in the area where we lived my mother got agitated and told me to turn off the radio. I was only four years old and not sure how the radio worked so, in her fear or frustration, she aimed the chopper at the radio and smashed it. It was a good job it was what they then called an accumulator radio!

### **Richard Simmons.**

My mum was born to Sydney (Syd)) and Helen (Nellie) on 6 March 1920 in North London. Her father had previously enlisted in the Army in Aug 1916 and was seriously wounded in France in Feb 1917.

Syd was blown up and dragged into a bomb crater where he lay for 36 hours before he was rescued by a medic from his own class at school, as many of the regiments were drawn from the same area, 19<sup>th</sup> London (St Pancras).

He was posted as seriously wounded and Mum's Mum 'Nellie', went to the War Office and said she was not going to leave until they agreed she could go to the front in France to nurse her Syd. Initially they refused but she also refused to leave when they went to close for the night. 'How will you get there?' she was asked. 'I can cook on a troopship' she replied.

They relented and she did indeed find him in a field hospital in France. She cleaned the mud on his nails from the trenches and the crater. She also nursed Gurkhas and retained a respect for them that she passed onto mum.

When well enough to return home they did so in the same 3 -ship convoy, but on separate ships. One of the ships was struck by a torpedo and sunk. It was only on their return to England that Nellie discovered he was on the other ship and had survived. Syd subsequently required two years of further treatment having lost a leg and eye together with extensive shrapnel wounds before being well enough to return home from hospital rehabilitation in London. This clearly had an effect on Mum and is always on my mind on Remembrance Day for as a child I saw the way he bore his wounds with such dignity and his commitment to the British Legion.



Finally to end this thought-provoking edition, a poem by **Gillian Walmesley**.

### Hope

God gives us hope  
To face the future  
Of better things to come.  
For at life's end  
We'll see His glory  
Like the rays of a golden sun.

But meanwhile  
We are faced with sorrow  
The result of human greed.  
The warning signs  
Are ever present  
It's vital we should heed.

God's creation  
Is a gift  
Gives life to all mankind  
But this Pandemic's  
A wake-up call  
Though its source we can't define.

Throughout the world  
Like tentacles  
It's difficult to restrain.  
It does not choose its victims  
Just treats us with disdain

Borders closed  
Restricted movement  
Normal life is put on hold.  
Advice keeps changing  
Can we believe.....  
Whatever we are told?

Many deaths  
Recorded daily  
The virus still on the move.  
A vaccine needed,  
There are many trials  
But wait to be approved.

Fear is rife,  
This growing crisis  
The world's had such a shock.  
Many respond  
With concern and love  
But others deny and mock.



The future uncertain  
We cannot predict  
What lies for us ahead  
But we have the choice  
To show compassion  
And think of others instead.

God loves us  
He forgives our sins  
Our faith will keep us strong.  
Stand firm....believe....  
His power prevails  
Against those intent on wrong.

As God's children  
You give us hope  
To face the future together.  
Lord, in your mercy  
Grant us peace  
And be with us for ever.

