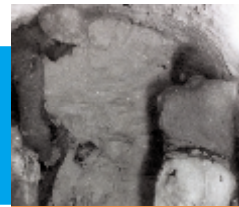


LIVING HISTORY
Read Elsie Stygall's
real life story
of WWII



YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE
Peter brings us
up to date with
the Surveys



TUNNEL TALES
Tunnels under
construction
CONTINUES FROM ISSUE 2

ISSUE 3
Nov 2011

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TUNNEL TIMES

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF RAMSGATE TUNNELS HERITAGE GROUP

ELSIE SHARES HER MEMORIES OF WWII

ORAL HISTORIES PROJECT PRESENTS ELSIE'S STORY

Elsie was just eighteen when the War broke out, though you would never guess it when you meet her. Still living in her own house, though widowed now, she has several family members nearby, but remains independent, positive and articulate.

On Sunday September 3rd 1939, Elsie had her first experience of seeking shelter in the Tunnels. With some of her young friends she was bathing in the old seaside pool by the Granville Marina when they were all suddenly told to take shelter. "The boys were full of bravado, "I'm not giving up my swim," shouted one. Then the siren went off, you've never seen anyone move so fast! They were all inside the Tunnels before we girls had got dressed.

Like many in Ramsgate, Elsie mostly used the Tunnels if the Siren warned of danger when she was in town, (they had an Anderson Shelter at home). The Tunnels were quickly supplied with lights and a forced air system, but she still remembers the dark, musty smell. Usually, if she was out shopping or at her job, she would enter the Tunnels at the Harbour end, and then walk straight up towards the exit on Boundary Road, by Chatham Place. There she'd wait until the All Clear was given, then catch her bus home.

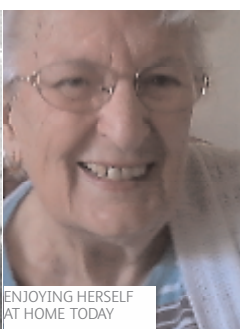
Elsie's war took her away to Maidstone, then she joined the WAAF. She didn't return to Ramsgate until 1942, by which time the air raids were fewer. But the Tunnels still played their part protecting the townsfolk from the threat of further raids, doodlebug attacks and shelling from France. She vividly recalls the tedium of waiting for the All Clear during the shelling. "With the shells, you'd hear the alarm and take shelter. Then you always had to wait an hour after the last shell before you could leave. Many a time you'd get to the last five minutes then BANG!! Then the waiting begins again."



ELSIE ALL DRESSED UP AT HOME IN HER GARDEN IN RAMSGATE BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF WAR



ELSIE JOINS THE WAAF IN 1942



ENJOYING HERSELF AT HOME TODAY

“ The Oral History Project continues on its way. Gradually we are amassing a very fascinating archive of personal memories of people who have first-hand memories of the wartime tunnels. If you recall any stories or events which involve the tunnels, please get in touch. ”

STEPHEN DAVIES - AUDIO ARCHIVIST
s.davies@ramsgatetunnels.org

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING PETER?



PETER BORROUGH
PROJECT MANAGER

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

It will soon be three months since we received the first installment of our funds from the Jubilee Peoples Millions and we have made a good start on our project.

On this page you will see some of the fruits of Stephen Davies' work on our oral history project. He has been using our newly purchased recording equipment and Elsie's story is one of the many he has recorded so far.

Meanwhile up in Watford the Building Research Establishment experts are grappling with the problems of opening an underground tourist attraction to the public. They are undertaking an exhaustive study of the many regulations we will have to comply with to ensure our visitors can be confident that everything has been done to ensure they can enjoy themselves in a safe environment.

Other companies, with the appropriate expertise to undertake our surveys have been identified. The first survey will look at the quality of the air in the tunnels and whether there are any substances down there which have to be dealt with. We don't want any nasty surprises affecting the enjoyment of our visitors! All of the companies we approached are enthusiastic about the project. They are currently poring over the specification we have prepared and are working out how much they will bid. We are holding our breath hoping at least one bid will be within our budget.

The community continues to offer their support for the project and we continue to receive requests for presentations to local clubs and societies. The team are happy to visit your club, school or even your pub to tell you about the history of the tunnels and all about our project and plans to have the tunnels re-opened for everyone to enjoy.

To get in touch with Peter email - p.borrough@ramsgatetunnels.org

To book a presentation email - exhibit@ramsgatetunnels.org

Do you, or anyone you know have any recollections of the Tunnels during WWII?

We'd like to hear stories of you sheltering in the Tunnels during an Air Raid, or recalling tales of the train line running along the seafront.

Contact us at admin@ramsgatetunnels.org

CONTINUED FROM ISSUE 2

The 'Top Hat' Mayor & the Air Raid shelters

TUNNEL TALES: WHERE WE SHARE A STORY OF THE TUNNELS IN ACTION

After permission to construct the tunnel network was given from the Home Office, work started immediately. In July the final approval and authorisation of a 65% grant was received from the Lord Privy with additional entrances and ventilation given priority.

Construction was carried out by sinking shafts to the required depth, then heading out under the streets. A narrow gauge rail track was installed in parts of the system and a small diesel locomotive was used to transport the spoil. Chalk dug and excavated during the build was deposited on the foreshore between the West Pier & Western Undercliff Promenade in anticipation of the future extension of the promenade.

Work continued at a rate of 24 feet per day. The first section from the harbour timber yard to Queen Street was opened by the Duke of Kent on June 1st, 1939. This 440 yard section had been completed in just 2 months.



WORKERS DIGGING THE VERTICAL SHAFT BEFORE TUNNELING UNDER THE STREETS ABOVE

By August 1939 work had progressed around the town and the Borough Engineer reported accommodation was available at:

St Augustine's Caves (Entry at Western promenade near Government Acre)

Granville Hotel Caves (Entry from Hotel car park)

Old Railway Tunnel (From Marina, Merrie England)

Old Railway Tunnel (Dumpton Park Drive near skating rink)

Old Railway Tunnel (From Hereson Rd near Muir Rd)

New Deep Tunnel (Entry from Queen St car park)

New Deep Tunnel (From Timber Yard car park at Harbour)

New Deep Tunnel (Entry from Liverpool lawn, Westcliff)

Unlike WW1 the dangers of air raids were well understood. The reality of the situation hit the town within minutes of the declaration of war when air raid sirens signalled a Red Warning. Thankfully this turned out to be a false alarm. It was thought to become a familiar sound as warnings of not just air raids, but also naval bombardments and shelling from nearby occupied France echoed across the town.

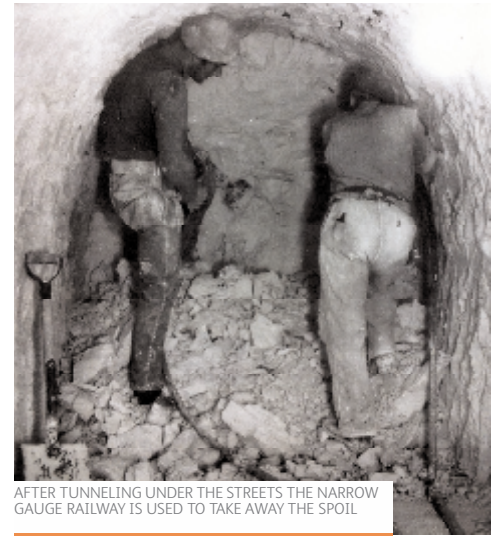
AIR RAID WARNING SYSTEM

IMPENDING AIR RAID: (Red Warning)
Continual rise & fall of note

ENEMY AIRCRAFT OVERHEAD:
Rapid rise & fall of note

DANGER PASSED: (White Warning)
Continuous tone/note for two minutes - All clear

Work on the tunnels continued, and on December 8th the Borough Engineer reported a further 7 entrances would be available, but not concreted - Spencer Square, Liverpool Lawn, Hospital, Ellington Park x2, Arklow Square & Townley Castle.



AFTER TUNNELING UNDER THE STREETS THE NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY IS USED TO TAKE AWAY THE SPOIL

Proposed extensions from Ellington Road to the 'Dust Destructor' in Princes Road via Wilfred Road, and to Southwood Sports Ground via Grange Road, Ashburnham Road, Southwood Road and Prices Avenue were not granted permission. It was pointed out the accommodation available on the completion of the accepted building works would be sufficient for 32,900 people. With further public sheltering in the shape of trenches and re-opened dug-outs etc shelter coverage was at an all time high at 36,587, which was in excess of the total population of the town.

The regional Technical Adviser also noted that provision in the shape of domestic shelters had been made for a further 15,520 people and he continued...

"On the face of it, therefore, it would appear that a very strong argument would have to be put forward to justify a further extension of this scheme involving an additional expense of £18,700 for 1,683 yards of new tunneling, which, at four persons per yard, would provide accommodation for 6,732 more people, bringing the total combined accommodation in domestic and public shelters to no less than 58,839! Even should further shelters become necessary beyond that which has already been arranged for, it is suggested that it could be better and more cheaply served by the more usual form of shelters such as basements or trenches."

Not surprisingly there was no further expansion of the main tunnel system for the remainder of the war.

WE'VE BEEN BUSY TUNNELING AWAY

NOT QUITE DIGGING UP THE PAST

With no picks, blasting tools, or narrow gauge railway in sight, a few hardy souls have undertaken to construct our Mobile Tunnel Exhibit.

Promoting the Ramsgate Tunnels Project is part of our long term strategy. After a recent committee meeting the concept of having a mobile exhibit was warmly received and passed. So the construction arm of the group, messrs Keith, Phil and Jim began designing and building the structure.

Work is still ongoing, and so far the efforts of the team are bearing fruit. We hope to have the main Tunnel

finished shortly so we can concentrate on decorating and fitting out the exhibit. We'd like to say thanks and offer our gratitude to those friends and relatives who have donated time, tools and various pieces to help us create this unique display.

In late November we will be unveiling the Mobile Tunnel Exhibit at an organised event in town. We plan to use it over the next year to show what living conditions underground were like for those taking shelter during an air raid. If your school, business, Church group etc would be interested in us visiting your venue and staging a short presentation including the Exhibit, please get in touch. You can write to us at the address above, or email us at exhibit@ramsgatetunnels.org



TUNNEL BUILDERS STUDY PHOTOGRAPHIC REFERENCE OF THE ACTUAL UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE