



WALK THIS WAY

Friends & supporters enjoy the Boxing Day ramble



PREPARING FOR WAR

As WWII ends plans are made for the future of Europe



TUNNEL ON VIEW

See the Mobile Tunnel Exhibit in Margate V.I.C.

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TUNNELTIMES

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF RAMSGATE TUNNELS HERITAGE GROUP

TAKING A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



OVER 50 FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS JOIN THE 'RAMBLE ROUND RAMSGATE' ON BOXING DAY

A WINTER WALK ENJOYED BY ALL

With Christmas day done and dusted many friends and supporters of Ramsgate Tunnels joined us for the 'Ramble Round Ramsgate'. The opportunity to walk off the excesses of the previous day was taken by over 50 dedicated ramblers to visit the sites of the Tunnels located above and below ground.

Warm weather, good company and mulled wine combined to provide a refreshing relief from the seasonal rush and shopping madness as the group followed the route of the Town's famous tunnels.

The walk, which highlighted the visible features of the tunnels which still exist above ground and the system below were enjoyed by all. Project Manager Peter Borough led the way with an informative commentary which included many other points of interest.

Ramsgate was once the playground of the rich and famous, a fact that is well reflected in its rich architecture, manicured lawns and stunning terraces. There can't be many towns which can boast so much history both above and below ground.

The two and a half mile ramble began at Jacobs ladder near the marina. The walk passed along Addington

Street, once a military camp for the Duke of Wellington's troops during the Napoleonic Wars. The tunnels pass directly under the street with long forgotten entrances below the delightful Regency areas of Spencer Square and Liverpool Lawn. The route continued to Cannon Road, a former Rope Walk and home of the Cannon Brewery, where another entrance is concealed below the present day car park. A short break was taken at the Oddfellows Club on the High Street where the group were provided with complimentary mince pies and mulled wine.

Suitably refreshed the ramble continued passing another of Ramsgate's fine Georgian buildings at Townley House, former home of the Townley family and often frequented by Royalty including the Princess Victoria. Continuing along Boundary Rd we passed the only two remaining visible entrances before ascending Victoria Road to Arklow Sq where another entrance is concealed below the grass. Peter also enlightened us to the history of this area and its connections with Lady Augusta, the D'Este family and Lord Truro, all of whom are still remembered today as their names are reflected in street and road names throughout the town. The ramble finished overlooking the site of Ramsgate's former Harbour Station and railway tunnel entrance, which is where we hope to give the tunnels a new beginning.

WE'RE BACK AFTER OUR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BREAK. WE HOPE YOU HAD A TERRIFIC FESTIVE SEASON



VISIT THE **MOBILE TUNNEL EXHIBIT** THE DROIT HOUSE, STONE PIER, MARGATE.

This mid-term school break sees the first public viewing of our Mobile Tunnel Exhibit. With the kind help and generosity of our friends at the Margate Visitor Information Centre, we are able to set up and display our Tunnel Exhibit in their main Gallery. Also on show will be the many artifacts generously donated by many of our friends and supporters.

THANET VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE
THE DROIT HOUSE, STONE PIER, MARGATE
01843 577 577

FEBRUARY 12th - FEB 19th

COMING SOON

School Essay Competition

We hope to have a schools story competition ready to role out in the next few weeks. Just a few things to iron out before we 'Blitz' the idea...

Your Vision

We're currently working on our 'vision' for the Tunnels attraction design which we hope to unveil in a few months time. What we'd like is to hear your thoughts and ideas to see if we can incorporate them. More details and dates to follow...

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION WINNER

CONGRATULATIONS TO TONY AVERY

Well done to Tony for knowing the date of the Ramsgate 'Blitz', August 24th 1940. We sincerely hope you enjoyed the case of 'Blitz Beer' which you won and celebrated Christmas and the New Year in style.



Our thanks to Gadd's brewery for supplying the prize

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are a collective group of volunteers from various backgrounds, cultures and experience. It is our aim to survey, promote and design an attraction in Ramsgate to rival any in the South East.

Email: admin@ramsgatetunnels.org or visit: ramsgatetunnels.org
Ramsgate Tunnels (Ramsgate Tunnels Heritage Group) Custom House, Harbour Parade, Ramsgate, CT11 8LP



We hope you enjoy this months Tunnel Times. If you have any stories, or would like to get in touch please email us or visit our website.

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

As one war ends, the possibility of another looms large

THE WAR IS OVER, LET US PREPARE FOR WAR

As war continued the ARP Committee kept a watchful eye on the shelters which were regularly patrolled by members of the fire brigade. Despite council policy to discourage people from remaining in the tunnels between raids, a census taken in late 1940 revealed that 957 people (324 families) were living in the railway tunnels. The haphazard way hessian cubicles were constructed presented an obvious fire risk, so the council cleared a further section of the tunnel towards the Broadstairs end and constructed new cubicles in accordance with the Fire Brigade requirements. Permanent seating was placed at intervals thereby creating fire breaks. Those living below ground were moved to the new area and were required to dispose of their old cubicles.

In February 1941 a Medical Aid post was established in the tunnels and was staffed at most times by the St John Ambulance Brigade with a Health Visitor attending during the day. Also in February the council became aware that dances and concerts were held frequently in the railway tunnel and that collections were being made.

THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED:

That such entertainments be limited to two evenings each week and that they take place only between the hours of 7pm - 9.30pm

That such entertainment be organised and controlled by the appropriate warden or other responsible person or persons nominated by the council.

That the Borough Engineer be requested to allocate the positions at which such entertainment shall take place.

That collections in the Tunnel shall not be permitted.

Following numerous complaints about fumes from cooking on oil stoves the council decided to experiment with canteen facilities in the shelters. Initially trials were held at the junction of the main railway tunnel and its spur to Hereson Road, to be followed by two further facilities at the Boundary Road and Queens Street car park entrances. It's not known if these canteens were ever opened.

Such was the congestion and pollution that a plan was submitted to the Ministry for permission to construct a new entrance at the junction of Dumpton Park Drive and Montefiore Ave to provide a fire escape and additional ventilation. The plan was refused with the Government Inspector suggesting an additional ventilation shaft instead.



Hessian screens provided some privacy in the tunnels



YALTA SUMMIT - 1945, WITH CHURCHILL, ROOSEVELT AND STALIN IN TALKS

During a visit in March of 1941 the Inspector suggested replacing manhole covers on the shafts with ventilation covers. The Borough Engineer pointed out that it was only the Marlborough Road section that required additional ventilation and agreed to fit a ventilating cowl in that area. This entry in the ARP Precautions Committee Minutes suggests the shafts were not used for ventilation as originally planned.

Toilets were placed in recesses at intervals throughout the network. At the start of the war Margate Corporation loaned Ramsgate a horse drawn 'mud drum' to remove waste. This was free of charge until 1941 when the Corporation asked for a weekly hire charge of two shillings and sixpence.

At the cessation of the war, entrances to the tunnels were closed and the system fell into disrepair, apart from the section from Ellington Park to the Harbour. By 1950 a large sewer pipe (Newington Trunk Sewer) was installed under Ellington Park down toward the Harbour. The pipework slowly disappears into the floor near the Harbour end leaving the Tunnel intact. Many smaller shelters were abandoned and covered over.

Some air raid sirens were retained as a means of calling out members of the part time or retained Fire Brigade. This was done by means of a continuous (white) note until the 1970's when a personal radio alert system was introduced.

THE COLD WAR 1947-1991

It's well known history repeats itself and preparations for wars are no exception. The 'Cold War' can trace its beginning back to early 1945 when the 'big three' of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met at Yalta to discuss re-establishment of the nations of war-torn Europe. As a result of this meeting, Eastern Europe came under the control of Stalin's Soviet Union. In 1946 Stalin gave a speech declaring Communism and Capitalism were incompatible and Churchill gave a speech in which he declared an 'Iron Curtain' had descended across Europe. In 1949 Russia tested its first atomic bomb and in 1950 President Truman approved development of the H bomb. By 1952 Britain was developing atom bombs. The 'Cold War' was underway.

As in WWII the British authorities became concerned about the escalating situation and plans were drawn up to protect the public. Little was known about Ramsgate's

plans until confidential government records were opened in 2008. Again, Ramsgate's Borough Engineer Mr RD Brimmel was ahead of the game and in January 1951 he produced a plan to re-open and reinforce the existing ARP tunnel system from WWII. In addition to this a plan was developed to construct new tunnels with access points covering the expanding town. These plans remained filed as 'Secret' until released by the National Archives in 2008. The plan was divide into three schemes.

SCHEME ONE:

Widen the Ellington Road section of the existing ARP system which was partly blocked by the Newington Trunk Sewer. This scheme would serve 2,860 houses, 10,000 people, and would include 1,500 yards of the tunnel. The cost was estimated at £16,500, this included the cost of re-opening the remainder of the existing network.

SCHEME TWO:

A new 700 yard tunnel was to be dug under London Road from Pegwell Road to Nethercourt with an entrance at each end. This would serve 1,150 houses, 4,010 people at an estimated cost of £15,500.

SCHEME THREE:

Serving the Newington Area was by far the most ambitious. The tunnel was to start under the northern end of Princess Margaret Ave and continue to the southern end, follow the boundary of Newington Estate to Cheriton Ave, along Cheriton Ave to Newington Road, along Whitehall Road to Margate Road, and then along Margate Road to its junction with Allenby Road. This tunnel would be 2,850 yds long and serve 2,830 homes and over 10,000 people. Estimated cost, £52,500.

The three schemes would make more than four and a half miles of tunnel available for almost 41,000 people living or working within a quarter mile radius of an entrance. The total estimated cost was £84,500.

There is no record of this work being carried out, although residents remember extensive 'sewer' works being carried out around the town.

If you or your business would like further copies of the Tunnel Times please contact us at - ttcopies@ramsgatetunnels.org

If your business, office, establishment, shop etc would be able to help distribute the Tunnel Times, contact - ttcopies@ramsgatetunnels.org