‘Tunnel Town’: a Spatial History of the Ramsgate Tunnels during the Second World War

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Abstract: This dissertation is an examination of the civilian experience of sheltering on the Home Front during the Second World War using as a case study the Ramsgate Tunnels. The cultural memory of sheltering on the Home Front has been overwhelmingly shaped by the Blitz and therefore has been resoundingly London-centric. Adopting a micro-history of a coastal town permits for greater complexity in the history of the lived experience on the Home Front. Those who sheltered in the Ramsgate Tunnels were historically defined by their seaside topography and pleasure-seeking economy, which was transformed and challenged by the arrival of total war and a new subterranean reality. This dichotomy of identity was symbolised by the creation of ‘Tunnel Town’ in the Ramsgate Tunnels, which reflected larger universal wartime discourses surrounding the home, spaces of protection, hygiene, privacy, and comfort. To address the paucity of primary material concerning the Ramsgate Tunnels this dissertation uses a spatial analytical framework alongside photographic evidence, material culture and oral history to engage with larger themes of privacy, ownership, identity, and home on the Home Front. While focusing on the specific nuances of the Ramsgate Tunnels this dissertation makes connections to a broad range of themes; the role of the seaside, the juxtaposition between seascapes and the subterranean, medical discourses on sunlight and health, the material culture of the Home Front, the memory of war (and civil war), tourism, and the relationship between seaside towns and wartime urbanism.

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Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic upon this dissertation

Like many other research projects, this study was significantly affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The most notable effect the pandemic has had upon this study is that I was unable to visit the site which was closed for the duration. This meant I have not engaged as planned with the commemoration and vistors' use of the Ramsgate Tunnels today. Also, events which had been planned with those who sheltered in the Tunnels as children or with their relatives were repeatedly cancelled. Therefore, this work was unable to fully engage with the relationship between immersive heritage and spatial history through the lens of the Ramsgate Tunnels case study as initially conceived.

My access to archives has also been extremely limited. In my case I was unable to visit in person the Imperial War Museum Archive, the National Archive or the Kent History and Library Centre. Ramsgate's archives were merged with the Kent History and Library Centre's larger Kent collection and a majority of these documents have remained uncatalogued. Due to my inability to visit I was unable to access these documents which would have been a valuable source. I was able to visit that which remains of the local Ramsgate Heritage collection held at the Ramsgate library. However, after the 2009 fire much of the primary materials held in the town were destroyed. And due to the vulnerability of the surviving shelterers during the Covid-19 Pandemic, I was unable to conduct interviews as planned. Therefore, this project has taken a different direction to that which I had originally proposed.

Acknowledgements

This work first began as an idea during my undergraduate degree, I was overwhelmed by the story of the Ramsgate Tunnels that I felt compelled to dedicate an entire study to them. I must begin by offering my greatest gratitude to my supervisors Juliette Pattinson and Charlie Hall, who have provided to me their support, thoughts, and time above and beyond. It has been an honour to converse with them about my study and learn from them how to be an academic, without their wisdom and patience this project would have never reached this stage.

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I would not have ever made it to this point in my life of undertaking a Research Masters without my mother Juliet. Her eternal confidence in me and her love for history has modelled me into who I am today. Quoting George Washington:

‘All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her.’

This study would never have been completed without her unwavering support and dedication; she has been my partner from the very beginning, and I am endlessly grateful to her.

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Introduction

'Life Goes on as normal for residents of Ramsgate': the Ramsgate Tunnels and its relationship to the Home Front

> [T]he air was filled with dust and debris; it took a long time to settle. There were various people killed and injured. Bombs had landed in all different places. My dad had a large aviary full of budgerigars. He had approximately ninety pairs of various colours, all with eggs and young at different stages. His aviary and shed were blown apart. There were dozens of birds with legs and wings off. He had to destroy dozens of injured birds. It was a terrible shame.
>
> Dennis Rose, *A Ramsgate Boy's Memories of the Second World War*[1]

Dennis Rose's memoir is written from the perspective of an eight-year-old during the Second World War in Ramsgate. Whilst Rose had already experienced air raids, 24 August 1940 redefined his and the town's relationship with home, sheltering and the surface. This series of air raids on one single day was a decisive moment in the history of Ramsgate's Blitz and triggered the full extent of the wartime inhabitancy of the Ramsgate Tunnels. This date in particular was a turning point as it not only justified the creation of the Tunnels but highlighted how effective they were as an undergrown shelter. This was recognised at the time by specialist respondent for the *Daily Telegraph* Richard Capell who attributed, 'beyond question', the saving of hundreds of lives to the 'astonishing catacombs' excavated from the chalk the town was built upon.[2] These 'catacombs' were a purpose-built and designed deep level shelter network which stretched four miles beneath Ramsgate's town centre. Despite how unique and effective the Ramsgate Tunnels were as a deep shelter they have been 'largely forgotten' from popular memory of the Blitz and the Second World War.[3]

The Second World War has been an enduring part of British collective identity and as Geoff Eley notes no longer does one have to have experienced it first-hand to 'remember' it.[4] Lucy Noakes

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[1] Dennis Rose, *A Ramsgate Boy's Memories of the Second World War* (Ramsgate: Michael's Bookshop, 2011), p.9.
[2] 'What War Means To The Towns Of England: Ramsgate's Tunnel Shelters; Messerschmitts on Public View', *Illustrated London News,* 31 August 1940, p.15.
[3] Gabriel Moshenska, *The Archaeology of the Second World War: Uncovering Britain's Wartime Heritage*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Archelogy, 2013), p.121.
[4] Geoff Eley, 'Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II', *American Historical Review,* Vol. 106: No. 3 (June 2001), 818-838 (p.818).

argues that despite the fact the Blitz was never the universal experience it was believed to be, it became the centre of public memory surrounding Second World War.[5] It has been kept, as Penny Summerfield describes, 'vigorously' relevant by popular culture.[6] The Blitz which has held an undeniable presence in popular memory was explained by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson as a means of asserting a sense of continuity in a rapidly changing present through the stability of a shared past.[7] This is especially evident in periods of national and international crisis, such as the September 11 attacks, when the Blitz has been invoked as an iconic historical precedent of national fortitude.[8] Most recently the Covid-19 Pandemic has inspired a tremendous amount of public and scholarly discourse and comparisons with the Blitz and the Home Front.[9]

The Blitz transformed the Home Front and placed the civilian population onto the 'front line' of the conflict.[10] Therefore the history of the Blitz is also the history of sheltering. Those without access to an Anderson shelter had to rely upon 'non-domestic shelters' which had the popular reputation of being without heating, ventilation, running water, electricity or even lavatories.[11] Such perceptions created contemporary stigma surrounding communal and especially subterranean shelters. This was because subterranean shelters were regarded as 'desperately primitive' as they fostered 'foetid' atmospheres: overcrowding and noise meant that these spaces were viewed as lacking privacy and comfort.[12] These primitive depictions even resulted in comparisons between the communal shelters and 'Hogarthian' levels of squalor that risked undermining all the improvements made in public sanitation and health 'during the last century'.[13] This perception of communal sheltering was largely influenced

[5] Ibid. pp.89-90.
[6] Penny Summerfield, 'Public Memory or Public Amnesia? British Women of the Second World War in Popular Films of the 1950s and 1960s', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol.48: No.4 (October 2009), 935-957 (p.935).
[7] Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (eds.) *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.2.
[8] Edgar Jones, Robin Woolven, Bill Durodié, and Simon Wessely, 'Public Panic and Morale: Second World War Civilian Responses Re-examined in the Light of the Current Anti-terrorist Campaign', *Journal of Risk Research*, Vol. 9: No.1 (2006), 57-73.
[9] Charlie Hall, 'Global Threats to an Island Story: Covid-19 and the British "Foundation Myth" of 1940', in Joanne Pettitt, *Covid-19, the Second World War, and the Idea of Britishness* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021).
[10] Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (London: Penguin, 2013), p.183.
[11] Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.71.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Mass Observation, 'Liverpool and Manchester', December 1940, p.11.

by examples of make-shift shelters such as the London Underground which repurposed spaces not necessarily equipped for prolonged sheltering. The experience of those that sheltered in the Ramsgate Tunnels redefines popular understandings surrounding public shelters and deep sheltering during the Second World War. The Ramsgate Tunnels were unique in the fact they were both repurposed and purpose built, in that they were designed by and for its local population from an already existing subterranean structure. They contradicted the image of sheltering as a transient existence and instead presented one of continuity, self-expression, and domestication. Thus, through using the Ramsgate Tunnels as a case study, this dissertation engages with the themes of privacy, ownership, identity and home on the Home Front. It also builds upon the assertion by Lucy Noakes that there is great value and importance in looking at what has been forgotten to understand what has been remembered.[14] Adopting a spatial history of the Ramsgate Tunnels will provide new ways of understanding the civilian experience of the Blitz and underground sheltering during the Second World War.

Understanding Spatial History

In his 1967 lecture 'Of Other Spaces' Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, defined his theory of heterotopia and in the process proposed new ways of thinking about space. Foucault notes that man does not 'live in a kind of void' but instead occupies a space that 'claws and gnaws' at the human experience. Space, then, is where time and history 'occurs'.[15] Engaging with Foucault's assertion that we need to critically engage with space in all historical study in order to examine human experience, historian Stuart Elden calls this 'mapping the present'.[16] Spatial history uses a 'historiographical narrative of interdisciplinary approaches' to space and place to create a methodological framework for analysis.[17] There this interdisciplinary nature helped to engage with memories and events in a new way,

[14] Lucy Noakes, 'Making Histories: Experiencing the Blitz in London's Museums in the 1990s', in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (eds.) *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (London: Berg, 1997), p.99.
[15] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Michel Foucault, Info*, 01 March 1967.
[16] Stuart Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum, 2002), p.7.
[17] Courtney J. Campbell, 'Space, Place and Scale: Human Geography and Spatial History in Past and Present', *Past and Present*, Vol.239 (May 2018), 23- 45 (p.23).

providing in turn access to experiences previously neglected.[18] This dissertation's use of spatial history methodology is rooted specifically in the spatial theories of Canadian humanist geographer Edward Relph and French sociologist Henri Lefebvre. Edward Relph, in his seminal work *Place and Placelessness*, argues that there is a deep-rooted and profound attachment between space and those that inhabit it.[19] This led Relph to conclude that the lived experience of space is not static, but, rather, is constantly being remade by human interaction which 'inscribes itself on the earth'.[20] This built upon the ideas of Henri Lefebvre, in his 1974 work *The Production of Space*, in which he asserts that 'the past leaves its traces' upon space.[21] As this study examines how the shelterers altered and personalised the Tunnel space it engages with the theory of lived space. In his spatio-temporal analysis of the London Underground, architect Davide Deriu uses the intersection of the body with the physical, social, symbolic landscape.[22] He emphasises the role of the spatial relationship created in the immersion of the corporeal in the subterranean. This dissertation uses the theoretical framework of Lefebvre's 'spatial existence' to investigate the relationship between the body and space in order to regard the subterranean space as a witness.[23]

'London Can Take it!: the Blitz in popular memory

The Blitz, which came from the German word Blitzkrieg meaning 'lighting war', was the aerial bombing campaign carried out by the Luftwaffe to weaken the British civilian morale in preparations for invasion.[24] The Blitz existed first in the public imagination, as throughout Europe in the 1930s it was believed that bombing would be a 'characteristic of future war' and result in an 'assault on civilians and civilian life'.[25] While there had been pre-war anxious anticipation about the social impact of aerial

[18] Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole and Alberto Giordano (eds.) *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), p.2.
[19] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, (London: Sage Publications, 2008), p.1.
[20] Ibid. p.18.
[21] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Hoboken: Wiley, 1991), p.37.
[22] David Deriu, 'Managing the Body and the City: the Contested Re-Appropriation of London Underground in Wartime', in: Barbara Czarniawska and Rolf Solli (eds.) *Organizing Metropolitan Space and Discourse* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2001), pp. 48-65.
[23] Lefebvre, p.129.
[24] 'The Blitz Around Britain', *The Imperial War Museum* [Online], <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-blitz-around-britain> [Accessed on: 16 September 2021].
[25] Overy, *The Bombing War*, p.39.

bombardment, the nation had not been prepared for, as Richard Overy notes, the 'unprecedented violation' upon mundane spaces and 'familiar neighbourhoods'.[26] The severe contrast between the profound long-term material, social, and psychological consequences and how brief the act of bombing was only enhanced how devastating the Blitz was to the Home Front.[27] The historiography of the Blitz has been shrouded in readings of the event as a period of unmatched national solidarity and unwavering civilian resolve. Historian Robert Mackay attributes this singular focus to importance placed on the concept of the 'shared experience' of the Blitz strengthening 'social solidarity'.[28] Richard Titmuss, Constantine Fitzgibbon and David Thomson all echoed the opinion that this 'shared danger' of the Blitz served to 'weaken rigid class prejudices' and regional differences and argued that the sense of 'belonging to a national community' transcended all other social factors.[29] The Blitz made 'extraordinary demands' upon the civilian population which increased fears over the potential for social collapse.[30] Perhaps in response to this concern, Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 8 October 1940 was defiant and declared 'We can take it'.[31] The etymology of the phrase has also been attributed to the 1940 Ministry of Information film *London Can Take It! (1940*). In the film's narration by American journalist Quentin Reynolds the phrase 'We can take it' is reiterated, counteracting the expected social collapse with the depiction of civilians' unwavering positive morale against the backdrop of bomb destruction. Revisionist historian James Heartfield however perceived the phrase as an 'act of ventriloquism' when the establishment 'assumed the right to speak for the people'.[32] Heartfield argues the death toll, the wreckage cities and town endured, with some never returning to being industrial centres, and the psychological cost, show that the nation could not 'take it'.[33] *London Can Take it!* (1940) and the adaptations it inspired, *Britain Can Take it!* (1940) and *Manchester Can Take it too!* (1941), visually evoked the Blitz spirit. The Blitz spirit was a popular concept which, as historian Craig

[26] Ibid.pp.126-177.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Mackay, *Half the Battle*, pp.3-4.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Allen Packwood, and Stuart Roberts, 'How Churchill Waged War', *University of Cambridge* [Online], <https://www.cam.ac.uk/ChurchillAtWar> [Accessed on: 16 September 2021]
[32] James Heartfield, 'Revisiting the Blitz spirit: Myths about the Second World War won't help us understand what is happening today, *Spiked* [Online], 12 July 2005, http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/article/869/ [Accessed on 8 August 2021].
[33] Ibid.

Stewart-Hunter defines, mythologised the Blitz in popular memory and imagery as one of the 'finest' moments of 'togetherness and national unity'.[34] Angus Calder argues that the Blitz was 'instantaneously and spontaneously' mythologised at the time as an 'heroic event'.[35] This resulted in the Blitz being remembered, as Overy surmises, on the 'terms the authorities had originally wanted'.[36]

The bombing campaign since its end has been 'burnt into' cultural memory, through mass media, cinema, and museums, as an event of national significance.[37] From images of St Paul's Cathedral on fire to the Underground platforms turned into makeshift shelters, the Blitz has been understood primarily as a London experience.[38] The experiences of other cities and towns has been overshadowed by the focus on London. For example, the novelist George Orwell wrote in his diary at the time that he believed Ramsgate's experience of the Blitz had been 'officially minimised'.[39] Thereby Orwell was in consensus with the theory that in the process of forging the Second World War as a symbol of British national identity, the regional experience was often neglected for the creation of a cohesive national one.[40] This creation of a unified national experience of the Blitz and the Home Front in a larger sense was the basis for Calder's seminal theory of the myth of the Blitz.[41]

Looking beyond London: remembering the Blitz

Historians born after the Second World War have tended to have a greater revisionist critical detachment. This, in combination with the availability of Mass Observation reports about civilian morale across the nation, allowed for a reassessment of the dominant history of the Blitz. While the Mass Observation reports did contain regional stereotypes, they engaged with nuanced perspectives.

[34] Craig Stewart-Hunter, 'Britain Can Take It:' Rethinking British Morale in 1940', *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, Vol: 3 No.3 (2011), http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=406 [Accessed on: 19 September 2021].
[35] Angus Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p.2.
[36] Richard Overy, 'Why the cruel myth of the "blitz spirit" is no model for how to fight coronavirus', *The Guardian* [Online], 19 March 2020, < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/19/myth-blitz-spirit-model-coronavirus>, [Accessed on: 16 September 2021].
[37] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), p.153.
[38] Ibid.p.129.
[39] George Orwell, '03.09.40: George Orwell's Political diary 1940-41', *UCL: Orwell Archive* [Online], UCL Library Special Collections.
[40] Noakes and Pattinson (eds.) *British Cultural Memory*, pp.2-3.
[41] Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz*.

Historian Robert Mackay argues that the presence in newspapers at the time of London's 'performance' during the Blitz set a 'model' for how provincial cities should 'carry on'.[42] Therefore cities such as Coventry, Southampton, Plymouth, Birmingham, and Merseyside understood and defined their Blitz experiences by what was happening in the Capital. Historians Brad Beaven and David Thoms used Mass Observation reports as a means of accessing the impact of the Blitz upon the social and cultural experience of cities outside London.[43] Focusing on the micro-histories of three northern cities, Liverpool, Manchester and Hull, they were able to re-evaluate narratives surrounding the experience of the Blitz and the regionally-specific levels of civilian morale.[44] The Baedecker raids which occurred between April and June 1942 were a series of bombing campaigns which targeted the nation's most historic cities, chosen from Baedecker's *Great Britain: Handbook for Travellers*. These raids occurred in areas believed to be 'relatively safe' and therefore had weak defences; but the symbolic value of the targets was high. Canterbury Cathedral, for example, represented the heart of global Anglicanism and was for the Germans a 'main centre of English hypocrisy'.[45] Historian Brian Barton in his case study of Belfast during the Blitz found that the city, like Coventry and Canterbury, was unprepared for the 'sudden, terrifying deadly' consequences of aerial bombardment presuming its geographic position would protect it. Even if all of the air raid shelters had been fully utilised, they would have only provided protection for one quarter of the population.[46] Barton highlights in the 'official history' Belfast's experience of the Blitz as more 'horrifying than London' due to the fact the bombing campaign was upon the small dwelling houses of the poor. While these case studies aim to move away from the London-centric narrative of the Blitz they are still in direct conversation with the experience of the Capital as the experience of London is unquestionably important to the story of the Blitz. Regional studies such as the Ramsgate Tunnels allow for the complexity of the civilian experience across the nation and therefore nuance our understandings of civilian morale, impact and community response.

[42] Mackay, p.86.
[43] Brad Beaven, David Thoms 'The Blitz and Civilian Morale in Three Northern Cities, 1940–1942', *Northern History*, Vol. 32: No. 1 (1996), 195-203 (p.195).
[44] Ibid.p.196.
[45] Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, (London: Headline, 2004), p.613.
[46] Brian Barton, 'The Belfast Blitz April-May 1941', *History Ireland*, Autumn, 1997, Vol. 5: No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), 52-57, (pp.53-55).

Underground Sheltering

The major and consistent concern amongst the civilian population during the Blitz was where to go during an air raid.[47] Historian Adam Page argues that the material infrastructure and architecture of Britain was 'remade' by what he termed the 'new Blitz reality'.[48] This 'reality' transformed mundane spaces such as railway tunnels, tube stations, and basements into the 'architectures of survival'.[49] Page emphasises that the creation of shelter architecture revealed through its materiality the complexities and ambiguities of wartime society.[50] The sheltering experience on the Home Front was defined and differentiated by the topography and social geography of the shelter.[51] Scholarship surrounding Air Raid Precautions (ARP) on the Home Front has tended to focus on the evolution of the policy-making. Joseph S. Meisel, for example, who analysed official policy argues that the failure to provide for the working classes is illustrated in shelter designs which were as much informed by class factors as by geographical calculations of potential vulnerability.[52] A 1939 Mass Observation report surveyed the sheltering experience in the four major types of shelters used in London: Anderson shelters, brick surface shelters, reinforced basements and the London Underground. The report concluded that while the Anderson shelter was most frequently used by those that had access, it was the tube shelterers which had the greatest confidence in their shelter.[53] Therefore as war loomed, historian Susan. R. Grayzel suggests that ARP plans belonged as much to the lessons of the First World War as to 'the realm of the imagination'.[54] However, the question of sheltering was a point of contention, as the official shelter policy was class exclusive as the Anderson shelter required a garden for construction.[55] Whilst the Anderson shelters had been designed in anticipation of aerial bombardments as Grayzel highlights, their nature as a surface shelter weakened their effectiveness against the psychological cost of the noise made

[47] Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, p.369.
[48] Adam Page, *Architectures of Survival: Air War and Urbanism in Britain*, 1935–52 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), p.95.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. p.96.
[51] Overy, *The Bombing War*, p.137.
[52] Joseph S. Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol 5:3 (1994), 300–319 (p.318).
[53] Mass Observation, Air Raid Shelters (March 1939), pp.4-11.
[54] Susan R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.123.
[55] Ibid. p.275.

by aerial warfare.[56] Deep shelters on the other hand were the answer to lessons learnt from the First World War about the psychological consequences of warfare; due to their underground topography they provided respite to a degree from the soundscape of the Home Front. Therefore, shelterers were able to rest better in these deep shelters due to the distance from the surface was noise reducing and evoked a greater sense of security. Such subterranean shelters as the Ramsgate Tunnels and later Vietnam's Cu Chi Tunnels were physical culminations of what Grayzel defines as the duality of total warfare; the domestication of war and the militarisation of the domestic sphere.[57]

Yet, as historian Juliet Gardiner argues, the official Governmental Air Raid Preparations policy ran counter to the 'instinct to burrow in the face of danger'.[58] Underground sheltering met Governmental resistance due to the fear the subterranean space was conducive to the development of a deep shelter mentality. The subterranean was viewed as subversive and therefore prolonged exposure was thought to breed a 'defeatist' shelter mentality that would foster anti-social hysteria and civil disobedience.[59] The concerns over the scale of underground shelters derived from the risk of large numbers of civilians being killed at once in one attack. A defining characteristic both the London Underground-turned-shelter and the Ramsgate Tunnels shared was their inhabitants' resistance to this official policy against communal shelters. Many shelters were designed in the anticipation of 'short sharp raids' and thus frequently these spaces had poor ventilation, primitive lighting, little to no sanitation provisions, or facilities to make tea or food.[60] Historian Geoffrey Field theorises that it was 'official fear' surrounding underground sheltering which led to a deliberately negative correlation between underground sheltering and hygiene and safety concerns.[61] Contemporary descriptions of underground shelterers were often steeped in troglodyte imagery. The Ramsgate Tunnels was no exception as the sheltering population

[56] Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, p.275.
[57] Ibid. 'Cu Chi Tunnels', [Online] *History*, < https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/cu-chi-tunnels> [Accessed on: 27 January 2022], Jim Marett, 'Vietnam '67: My Life as a Tunnel Rat', *The New York Times* [Online], 9 February 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/opinion/vietnam-war-tunnel-rat.html> [Accessed on 27 January 2022].
[58] Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, p.375.
[59] Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy', p.318.
[60] Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, p.371.
[61] Geoffrey Field, 'Nights Underground in Darkest London: The Blitz, 1940–1941', *International Labour and Working-Class History*, Vol. 62 (2002), pp. 11–49 (p.15).

were labelled 'Tunnel Rats'.[62] Despite this stigma surrounding the subterranean many found comfort from the 'press of bodies' and the illusion of safety in numbers.[63]

The London Underground Deep Sheltering experience

The occupation of the London Underground by those 'taking their safety into their own hands' transformed the tube into a space of resistance.[64] Those seeking shelter would buy tickets and then inhabit the platforms at night before resurfacing the next day without having travelled anywhere. The London Underground was a transient experience of sheltering as by morning all evidence of the nightly occupation was removed and replaced with commuters as the Underground resumed its original function. In this way, the shelterers were tolerated but the priority of the space remained as a means of transport. American war photographer Thérèse M. Bonney documented the London Underground shelterers in her photography series 'Twelve views of residents'. Figure One captures the desperate makeshift attempts to find comfort. On the inscription of the photograph Bonney writes about these efforts with people sleeping their heads on one step, their shoulders on another and their feet on another.

[62] Kathy Bailes, 'Ramsgate Tunnels appeal for wartime "Tunnel Rats"', *The Isle of Thanet News* [Online], 25 February 2020, https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2020/02/25/ramsgate-tunnels-appeal-for-wartime-tunnel-rats/, [Accessed on: 14 September 2021].
[63] Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, p.371.
[64] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, p.139.

Figure 1: Thérèse M Bonney 'Twelve views of residents of London resting and sleeping in underground shelters built below churches, schools, and inside London Underground (Tube) stations and tunnels', n.d. (c1940-43), Artstor, <www.library-artstor-org.chain.kent.ac.uk/asset/SCHLES_130764489> [Accessed on: 4 September 2021].

Whilst highlighting the working class of London taking shelter provisions into their own hands, Overy refers in passing to the informal shelter communities such as the Chislehurst Caves in Kent which were occupied by nightly migrations from the East End. [65] The prevailing London-centric view of the Blitz bled into the history of underground sheltering, which was institutionally reinforced, as shown by the method used by the Imperial War Museum to document the Second World War. The Imperial War Museum, with the authority and status as the national museum of conflict, is trusted to accurately represent and therefore shapes the public's knowledge of the Second World War. Inherently there is a meaning attached to what has been preserved; in their sound collection archive which holds 33,000 recordings relating to conflict since 1914, there are only four oral testimonies concerning the Ramsgate Tunnels. In comparison, there are over 258 sound resources and a full collection of over 1730 objects

[65] Overy, *The Bombing War*, p.146.

in relation to the London Blitz.[66] The visual culture surrounding deep sheltering is inundated with depictions of the London Underground, from Bill Brandt to Thérèse M Bonney. Therefore, the experience of spatial themes such as subterranean darkness has been defined by images of London such as Bill Brandt's portrayal of the Elephant and Castle Underground platform lined with sleeping bodies.[67] An examination of the Ramsgate Tunnels rescues this distinctive case study from obscurity and permits new understandings of the civilian experience of sheltering during the Second World War.

The Ramsgate Tunnels Case Study

The question of the building of deep shelters was a political one, embroiled with the campaign launched by the influence of the deep level shelters during the Spanish Civil War. Between 1937 and 1938, various British engineers and scientists, among them J.B.S. Haldane, travelled to Spain to observe the 'passive defence' plans erected to protect the civilian population. These plans where brought back to Britain, ultimately inspiring a lot of the civilian defence preparations.[68] For Haldane the visit confirmed his belief of the British Government's lack of preparedness for the reality of aerial bombardment. His concerns culminated in the 1937 widely circulated handbook, *ARP*, sold as a manual to equip and help the 'ordinary citizen' on how to take personal responsibility for their safety.[69]

The omission of any mention of the Ramsgate Tunnels in the scholarship surrounding the Blitz and sheltering is apparent in Richard Overy's pivotal work: *The Bombing War: Europe, 1939-1945*. According to Overy, the efforts for the protection of the urban working class adopted by the radical left petered out in 1941 thus Haldane's shelters never manifested.[70] The deep shelters that did exist, both public and domestic, were for the majority of the time repurposed spaces that were makeshift solutions

[66] Imperial War Museum Online Collection, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search?query=london+underground+sheltering++&pageSize=30&media-records=records-with-media&style=list&filters%5BperiodString%5D%5BSecond+World+War%5D=on [Accessed on: 15 September 2021].
[67] Bill Brandt, 'Civilians sheltering in Elephant and Castle London Underground Station during an air raid in November 1940', D 156, [Online] Imperial War Museum Online Collections, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205194638> [Accessed on: 29 May 2021].
[68] David A. Messenger, 'Local Government, Passive Defense and Aerial Bombardment in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9', *Journal of Contemporary History* (2021), pp.1-18.
[69] J.B.S. Haldane, F.R.S, *ARP* (London: Victor Gollancz 1938), p.1.
[70] Overy, *The Bombing War*, p.147.

to the bombing threat at night and emptied during the daytime.[71] The London Underground was a striking example of this duality: by the morning all traces of the night-time sheltering occupation were replaced by the daily commuters as during the daytime the stations returned to their primary use as a transport system. In complete contrast to this transient sheltering experience the Ramsgate Tunnels was a deep shelter purpose built by local authorities for the single purpose of sheltering. Therefore, the Tunnels enabled a space for permanent not transitory sheltering, allowing its inhabitants to form subterranean lives separate to the surface. The Ramsgate Tunnels fostered a very different version of underground sheltering which highlights the impact of the spatial upon human experience. The Tunnels were an anomaly in British Air Raid Precautions as they were purpose designed as early as 1936. They were designed by the town's Borough Surveyor Richard 'Dick' Brimmell who applied the lessons of Ramsgate's experience of the First World War with the Spanish Civil War, and Haldane's campaign. Archaeologist Gabriel Moshenska when, analysing the cross-section of the Ramsgate Tunnels, highlights how closely they resemble the deep shelters built during the Spanish Civil War, going as far as to describe Brimmell's design as 'Barcelona-minded'.[72] Despite the Ramsgate Tunnels being, perhaps, the only material manifestation of the lessons of the Spanish Civil War and, in everything but name, of a Haldane deep shelter, Ramsgate has surprisingly been omitted from the national narrative and the historiography of underground sheltering.

The underground sheltering experience of the Ramsgate Tunnels was not static, as the shelterers were continuously evolving and altering the space throughout its inhabitancy. Shelterers during the Second World War forged emotional and psychological relationships with the spaces they sheltered within. For example, due in equal parts to habit and superstition, London shelterers were recorded passing available shelters during an air raid to get to the shelter they regularly sheltered in.[73] The Ramsgate Tunnels has remained imbued with the wartime relationship the town forged with the space, transforming the physical site into a permanent witness to the sheltering experience as traces of the

[71] Ibid. p.149.
[72] Gabriel Moshenska, *The Archaeology of the Second World War: Uncovering Britain's Wartime Heritage* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Archelogy, 2013), pp.121-122.
[73] Overy, *The Bombing War*, p.184.

social interaction and experience-making are retained in the landscape of the site. Due to the primary function of the Tunnels being a shelter, unlike other deep shelters which returned to their primary use, the Tunnels served no immediate post-war purpose, and therefore were abandoned, inadvertently preserving the sheltering landscape. There were, however, early covert plans during the Cold War for the revival of the deep level tunnel network as a civil defence measure; these plans were ultimately never realised. Ramsgate's Borough Engineer R.D. Brimmell, in anticipation of the escalating situation, was once again ahead of the curve, turning again to Ramsgate's historic legacy of subterranean sheltering in January of 1951.[74] The rudimentary plans Brimmell produced were threefold: to re-open, reinforce and expand the Ramsgate Tunnels network.

The Revaluing of the Regional Experience

The reconsideration of the history of the Blitz was a consequence of what Jay Winter coined the 'memory boom', which saw the explosion of interest and status in the Second World War through acts of commemoration and memorialisation. This also led to a rise in the desire by families to connect their personal history to bigger universal narratives as a means of validating and asserting importance upon their experience.[75] The power of cultural representations was the potential they had for linking generations. Winter uses the example of grandparents who had experienced the Blitz taking their grandchildren to the Imperial War Museum's 1989 'Blitz Experience'.[76] The 'Blitz Experience' was an interactive exhibition, part of a larger institutional shift towards making the past 'come alive', that offered visitors an opportunity to encounter the Blitz themselves.[77] Historian Lucy Noakes used the 'Blitz Experience' within her study of London Museum displays in the 1990s as a lens through which to look at the popular memory of the Blitz. Efforts to restage the Blitz have transformed this specific wartime experience into 'everyone's', thereby illustrating how reconstructions negotiate the meaning

[74] *'Tunnel History: 1954'* [Online]. Ramsgate Tunnels, <http://www.ramsgatetunnels.org/history.html> [Accessed on: 27 Janurary 2022]
[75] Jay Winter, 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the "Memory Boom" in Contemporary Historical Studies', *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007) pp. 363- 397 (p.380).
[76] Ibid.
[77] Noakes, 'Making histories', 89-104 (pp.89-91)

of the past.[78] Historian Geoff Eley has theorised that the act of restaging and re-remembering leads to parts of the real-life event being erased in the efforts for its preservation.[79] However, visitor experience-focused exhibitions arguably honoured the museum's original purpose for both entertainment and education.[80] Museums such as the Imperial War Museum have the authority not only to shape perceptions of an event but to create history, as shown through the exhibition of the Blitz as a national experience.[81] Therefore the 'Blitz Experience' exhibition had an immense impact upon the cultural memory of the Blitz. In 1988 Ramsgate conducted a study for the feasibility of reopening the Tunnels as a tourist attraction to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War a year later: the *Ramsgate Blitz Experience*. The interactive exhibition was proposed as Ramsgate's answer to the 'Blitz Experience' and therefore inserting its experience back into the cultural history of the Blitz.[82] This would have been the beginning of the Ramsgate Tunnels' use of 'immersive heritage' which, as Evinc Dogan defines, shared the same goal of 'bringing alive' the past but through the historic site and therefore enriching the visitor's experience.[83]

[78] Janet Watson, 'Total War and Total Anniversary: The Material Culture of Second World War commemoration in Britain', in Noakes and Pattinson (eds.) *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.10.
[79] Eley, 'Finding the People's War', p.819.
[80] Lucy Noakes, 'Making Histories', pp.89-91.
[81] Ibid.
[82] '*1988'* [Online]. Ramsgate Tunnels, <http://www.ramsgatetunnels.org/history.html> [Accessed on: 20 May 2021].
[83] Evinc Dogan, and M. Hamdi Kan, 'Bringing Heritage Sites to Life for Visitors: Towards A Conceptual Framework for Immersive Experience', *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research* (AHTR), Vol.8: No.1 (2020), 76-99 (p.77).

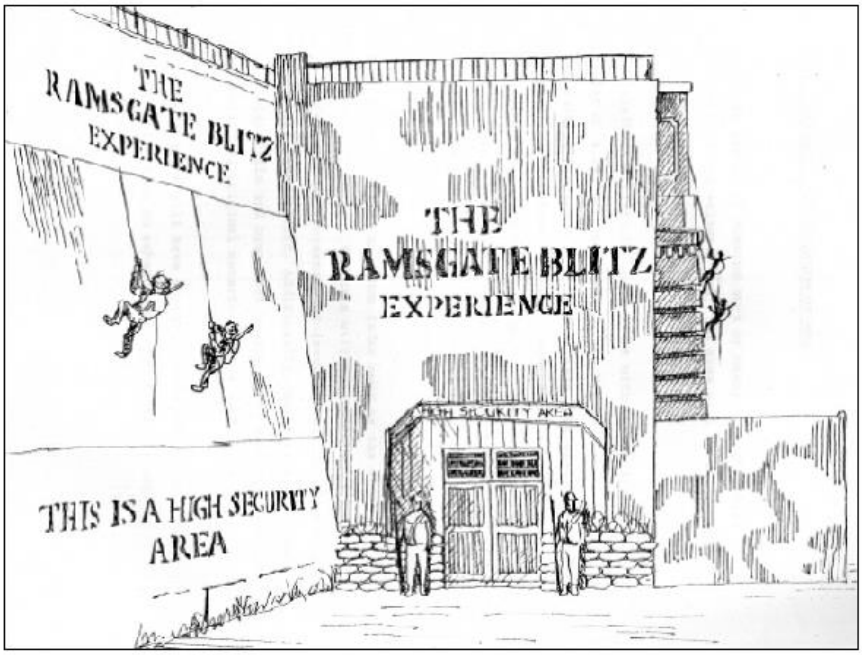

Figure 2: '1988 The Ramsgate Blitz Experience', Ramsgate Tunnels [Online], http://www.ramsgatetunnels.org/history.html [Accessed on: 20 of May 2021].

The act of remembering has been taught not only through museum exhibitions but through mass media, official representation, and acts of commemoration. There is a long legacy of commemorative performances as a way of accessing the past as shown in the yearly re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings. The act of preservation inherently places importance and status upon the past, therefore as Janet Watson argues memorials and commemoration efforts possess power in their ability to assert meaning upon the past. Thus the Second World War has been remembered as a moment of national defiance that evoked the ancient spirit of the island race, who stood steadfast and 'alone' against the Nazis after the fall of France.[84] Unlike traditional commemoration that has focused on the military dead, Watson has highlighted the 'remarkable' redefining of the conflict as a 'total war' and therefore also 'the war of the people'.[85] Using Noakes' definition, cultural memory 'is formed in the interstices between memories of lived experience and the range of cultural forms that represent a shared past to

84 Watson, 'Total War and Total Anniversary', p.1.
85 Ibid. p.2.

the wider group'.[86] However, as Penny Summerfield argues, the cultural memory of the Second World War has never been static, but constantly being 'reviewed, revisited and rewritten', even in 1940.[87] Therefore, due to the continuous interest and significance of the Second World War in popular culture, there has been a mounting desire for nuanced regional perspectives. Two of the major ways in which the Ramsgate Tunnels enhance our understandings of community, health and safety, sheltering, national unity and experience on the Home Front, were in its locational and sheltering identity.

Coastal identity

The coastal experience of the Second World War has been eclipsed due to the scale of metropolitan destruction. Ramsgate's omission mirrors what John K.Walton argues is a larger trend in academic scholarship which neglects the coastal town experience. Walton argues that the social impact and consequences of total warfare on the coast has been overlooked due to the perception that the seaside consisted of 'fringe and frivolous activities of little economic, social or political consequence'.[88] This image has been encouraged in post-war cultural representations of wartime coastal towns, such as Walmington-on-Sea, the fictional town that features in *Dad's Army*. It was a stand-in for all South Eastern coastal towns, with the show's humour partly being derived from the sincere, yet evidently ridiculous, belief of Captain Mainwaring that the sleepy seaside resort of Walmington-on-Sea was on the front line.[89]

Walton is frustrated with historians of leisure towns, resorts and tourism who have skipped over the experience of war as a distraction from the key themes of the seaside town. Ramsgate possesses the potential that Walton describes of the coastal scene, as a reflection of the universality of the wartime

[86] Lucy Noakes, 'Popular Memory, Popular Culture: The War in the Post-War World', *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 675–697 (p.678).
[87] Penny Summerfield, 'Dunkirk and the Popular Memory of Britain at War, 1940–58', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 45: No.4 (2010), 788-811 (p.811).
[88] John K. Walton, 'Leisure Towns in Wartime: The Impact of the First World War in Blackpool and San Sebastian', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31: No.4 (1996), 603-618 (p.604).
[89] Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p.186.

experience on a micro-level, whilst also projecting the experience of this distinct urban sector.[90] Ramsgate's Second World War experience was parallel to Walton's case study of First World War Blackpool. Both wars broke out at the height of the summer season, the economic peak for both seaside towns. Walton describes the moral objections leisure resort towns faced attempting to carry on with their 'frivolous' festivities into the autumn 'in the face of deaths at the front'.[91] The history of the coastal town during wartime offers a different perspective on how the civilian population coped balancing the pressures of wartime against their economic and social responsibilities of peacetime.[92] This for Walton was exactly what Second World War studies have neglected at their own 'peril', as this view challenges the popular belief of the 'shadow' of war dominating all life on the Home Front. The economic scarring and social deprivation of the Second World War transformed numerous coastal towns to the extent that the consequences are still felt 75 years on.[93] Whilst Ramsgate suffered additionally from the post-war decline in tourism, other pleasure resorts had profited from their distance from the front line and the demise of their competitors.

The Subterranean

So honey, don't get scared, it's there to be shared
And you'll feel like a king with a crown
So please don't be mean, better men than you have been
In the deepest shelter,
The neatest shelter,
The deepest shelter in town.

Florence Desmond, *The Deepest Shelter in Town*[94]

[90] Walton, 'Leisure Towns in Wartime', pp.609-12.
[91] Ibid. p.606.
[92] Ibid. pp.609-615.
[93] Sean Coughlan, 'Blitzed cities still deprived 75 years after war', *BBC News* [Online], < https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-54834759> [Accessed on:6 September 2021].
[94] Florence Desmond, *The Deepest Shelter in Town*, His Master's Voice (H.M.V), 1941.

The popular Second World War song, *The Deepest Shelter in Town* by comedienne Florence Desmond, portrayed deep shelters as subversive spaces that were used for illicit affairs. Deep shelters were defined by their subterranean character and therefore in popular culture were viewed as detached from the social rigidity of pre-war British society. For the historian Constantine FitzGibbon subterranean shelters had the feeling of 'being so very alive' which had an effect of 'sweeping away the social and sexual barriers'.[95] Thus the ways in which deep shelters were perceived was entrenched in the classical depictions of the subterranean. The cultural history of the subterranean was defined by the surface perspective looking down on the underground. Spaces are imbued with meaning and cultural significance as shown in popular culture's relationship with the subterranean as the realm of the Hades and the underworld. Cultural Studies scholar David L. Pike has written extensively on the cultural dimensions of the subterranean from its early creation to the rise of the vertical city. However, Pike and Rosalind Williams alike have found the subterranean possesses a dual identity as both the historical location of the dark underworld and the site of modern technological advancement.[96] The notion of the subterranean as the realm of the underworld was echoed during the First World War with the introduction of trench warfare and tunnelling under enemy lines. Warfare enhanced the characteristic duality of the subterranean as being at the same time both familiar whilst also foreign and threatening.[97] The Industrial Revolution and rise of the modern age saw a man-made underground emerge of railway tunnels, sewers and catacombs. By the turn of the 20th century the underground merged its historically primitive landscape with the pinnacle of modern advancement, becoming as Pike typified in the title of his work the *Metropolis on the Styx*.[98] Underground sheltering during the Second World War has been dominated by what Pike terms 'inorganic' masculine spaces which refers to either built or repurposed deep shelters that are man-made and often ruled by modern technology such as the London Underground. Whereas deep shelters like the Chislehurst Caves repurposed 'organic' feminine spaces

[95] Constantine FitzGibbon, *The Winter of the Bombs: the Story of the Blitz of London* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1958), p.133.
[96] David L. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800-2001* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground: An Essay on Technology, Society, and the Imagination* (London: MIT Publication, 2008).
[97] Ibid.p.12.
[98] Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*.

which are naturally occurring and historically have been used for shelter.[99] Using this spatial dichotomy the micro-history of the Ramsgate Tunnels transcends these distinctions as Ramsgate possessed a duality in its sheltering landscape: as being both an 'inorganic' and 'organic' subterranean space. [100]

Methodology

The paucity of primary material concerning the Ramsgate Tunnels is symbolic of the absence of regional representation within the history of the civilian experience on the Home Front. Surviving visual culture, such as William Herbert Gibson's '*Illustrated Account of Life in Ramsgate During the Early Years of World War II, 1939-1941'*, provides a contextual foundation on which this study builds.[101] Since the 19th century, Derek Sayer argues, the camera was the marker of modernity and due to its proliferation photographs have informed perceptions of the past and the present.[102] This work uses Sayer's definition of the photographic image as a 'trace or footprint' of reality acknowledges the limitations of photography of capturing experience in a still image.[103] Thus, visual culture need to be used in combination with other disciplines such as oral history and material culture to access the lived experience. Gibson's photographs of the sheltering space contextualise how the material culture of the 'Tunnel Town' was used within the space at the time. Adrienne D. Hood, referencing material culturist Thomas Schlereth, argues that material culture is not a discipline but a 'mode of inquiry' which uses artefacts to explore cultural questions.[104] Therefore as a means of inquiry it challenges the historian to 'think with the object', in the case of the Ramsgate Tunnels it emphasises the role of the enclosures as engaging with the question of how the shelterers made home underground.[105] Material culture's focus upon the mundane and what has been neglected from the traditional narrative is related to the wider oral

[99] Pike, *Subterranean Cities*, p.6.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99/F1 William Herbert Gibson, 'An Illustrated Account of Life in Ramsgate During the Early Years of World War II, 1939-1941'.
[102] Derek Sayer, 'The Photograph: the still image', in: Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2008), p.52.
[103] Ibid. p.54.
[104] Adrienne D. Hood, 'Material Culture: The Object', in: Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird, History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2008), p.177.
[105] Ibid.

history 'recovery history' movement. [106] Oral history is focused upon material which may not exist in any other form 'recovering the voices of those who have been hidden'.[107] Inherently it is a selective medium, as Corinna M. Peniston-Bird emphasises, there is a characteristic 'silence' which resonates in oral histories.[108] While this 'silence' has been a point of critique of the medium as it presents a limited perspective, in an interdisciplinary approach this is its strength. Achieved oral testimonies like Vera Ferris' account for the Imperial War Museum are enhanced by primary visual culture, primary material culture and a spatial analytical framework to create a complex and rich narrative of how the shelterers lived, altered, and personalised the Tunnel space.[109] This study contextualises these primary accounts with contemporary published materials such as local newspapers. The reason as to why this dissertation focuses on local newspapers such as *Advertiser and Echo, East Kent Times* and *Kent Messenger* is because it offers an idea of how the community processed and communicated the events which were happening around them. Published contemporary accounts are a rich additional source to engage with how the sheltering community was represented and understood at the time by themselves and others. Both national and local archives were used including the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, the Mass Observation Archive, Kent History and Library Centre Archive and the Ramsgate Local Archive.

Structure

The chapters of this dissertation are linked by juxtaposing elemental themes, such as fresh purifying sea air with the stale recycled subterranean climate and the contradiction of the Ramsgate Tunnels between the historic depiction of the subterranean as a funeral landscape symbolised by disease, dirt, and death and the domestication and home making of 'Tunnel Town'. These elemental conflicts symbolise the overwhelming identity conflict which underlined Ramsgate's experience of the Second World War, between its distinct pre-war pleasure holidaying landscape and its total warfare status.

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[106] Corinna M. Peniston-Bird**, '**Oral History: The Sound of Memory'**,** in: Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2008), p.106.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Jennifer Tucker, 'Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry', *History and Theory*, Vol. 48: No. 4 (2009), 1-8 (p.2).

Chapter One examines the conflict between Ramsgate's pre-Second World War seaside identity, spatially defined by its topography as a place of pilgrimage for rehabilitation and tranquillity which was the very antithesis to its wartime subterranean existence. This chapter surveys the effect of the dramatic spatial shift from the surface to the subterranean on perceptions of home and normality, whilst also considering the spatially defined theories surrounding the healing power of light and the 'diseases of darkness' which formulated distinctive links between light with health and darkness with death.[110] It also engages with the creation of the Ramsgate Tunnels, considering the role of the First World War and the Spanish Civil War in its conception.

Chapter Two focuses on life within the Ramsgate Tunnels during the Second World War. The chapter discusses the ways in which shelterers created a sense of home in 'Tunnel Town' and how these domestication efforts were a means of self-expression and a coping mechanism, whilst also considering the cultural juxtaposition between the subterranean environment and the domestication efforts. This chapter also considers the period of the Tunnels 'illuminated funfair' when the rest of the nation was eclipsed in blackout, emphasising this unique civilian experience of the Home Front. The chapter surveys the sheltering population's autonomy over the space and the success of their cultivation efforts in achieving the distinctions of a private shelter: hygiene, privacy, and a sense of home. This chapter also uses the Ramsgate's shelterers' prioritising the maintenance of everyday social rituals despite the constant deadly potential of total warfare as an interesting engagement with the popular shadow of war discourse, thereby using Ramsgate's creation of its subterranean 'Tunnel Town' as a striking case study of the civilian experience on the Home Front.

Chapter Three examines the effect and meaning of subterranean darkness in the Ramsgate Tunnels, as shrouded in imagery of entombment and claustrophobia. The darkness of the underground widely typified the subversive and dangerous. This chapter uses the spatial lens to gain a sense of the state of permanent liminality the shelterers lived within during the Second World War. This section also applies an elemental and anthropological lens as to how the space was navigated through the specific

[110] Ethel Gordon Bedford Fenwick (eds*.),* 'La Cure De Soleil: The Sun as a Prophylactic', *The British Journal of Nursing*, Vol 67: No. 1,746 (17 September 1921), p.173.

sensory experience of its wartime context. It surveys the transformation of subterranean darkness from its classical depiction as the 'kingdom of death' into a character of spaces that promised safety.

This dissertation, in its use of innovative new sources and adoption of a spatial theoretical framework, offers new insights into the lived experience of the Second World War. By providing the regional case study of the Ramsgate Tunnels it contributes to and nuances our understanding of the Blitz. It is to an examination of Ramsgate's coastal identity juxtaposing with its wartime subterranean spatiality that we now turn.

Chapter One

When the deckchairs became emergency bunkbeds: Ramsgate's descent from the sun worshiping surface to sanctuary in the dark subterranean

Figure 3: *Selling the seaside – British holiday posters*, [online]. Victorian and Albert Museum, updated 2021, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/selling-the-seaside-british-holiday-posters> [Accessed on: 1 March 2021].

The charming seaside vista depicted in the British Railways' 1954 advertisement of Ramsgate utilised quintessential motifs of the British seaside. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution which resulted in the rise of the railway-age and working-class disposable income, the social geography of the seaside was transformed forever. In response to the commercial boom of the seaside holiday, railway companies generated a wealth of material culture advertising this seasonal mass migration. Ramsgate was no exception to these balmy and romantic depictions of Punch and Judy performances or rows of jolly

deckchairs across golden-sand beaches. Historian John K. Walton has written extensively on the distinct identity of the British seaside as not only a destination for revitalisation and restoration, but as a site of working-class leisure.[111] The evolution of the social landscape was reflected in popular perception of the seascape as the culmination of childish innocence and leisure with natural tranquillity and the sublime.[112] Walton's analysis of the phenomenon of the British seaside defines the space as imbued with cultural meaning and imagination beyond just its natural topography. Walton therefore concludes that the seaside is a liminal space which has retained a self-consciously curated identity fuelled by an enduring affectionate nostalgia for an idealised seaside of the past.[113] Figure Three is an example of the post-war effort to re-assert this popular imagery of spades and sandcastles which was compromised during the Second World War.

The Second World War transformed the nation's experience of war with the arrival of total warfare as the Home Front became the new front line. In preparation for war, the sea-bathing landscape was fortified under the anti-invasion Ironside's Coastal Crust defence plans of 1939.[114] The health-inspiring scene once filled with tourists was emptied and replaced with barbed wire and mines. The very idea of the seaside existing in these forementioned cultural terms and signifiers is an oxymoronic concept in the context of total warfare. The seaside defined as this iconic seasonal hallmark of peacetime pleasure could not co-exist with the aerial bombardment of the civilian Home Front. Therefore, a very distinct version of the British seaside existed between 1939 to 1945 as shown in the creation of the subterranean Ramsgate. However, this seemingly unnatural abandonment of the surface and the sun for the darkness of the subterranean realm associated with sewers and death was the very opposite of a clean revitalising coastal health destination. The underground shelter itself worked as a symbolic manifestation of the polarity between Ramsgate's identity during and before the Second

[111] John K. Walton, 'The seaside resort: a British cultural export', *History in Focus*, 9 (2005) <https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-focus/Sea/articles/walton.html> [Accessed on:1 March 2021].
[112] John K.Walton, *The Victorian Seaside* [online]. BBC History, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/seaside_01.shtml> [Accessed on:1 March 2021].
[113] Ibid.
[114] Robert Liddiar and David Sims, 'A Piece of Coastal Crust: The Origins of a Second World War Defence Landscape at Walberswick, Suffolk', *History*, Vol. 97: No. 327 (2012), 402-430 (pp.402-410).

World War: a seaside holidaying destination which evolved into a coastal target. Through focusing below the surface of Ramsgate both literally and metaphorically one can engage not only with an enormously unique perspective on the civilian experience of the Home Front but also the long-standing belief in the connection between the picturesque and health. Ramsgate's town identity has always been in conversation with its topography from an active trading port to a sublime shoreline boasting vast coastal and health tourism.

This chapter will focus on how the subterranean Ramsgate came to exist, how this alternative wartime experience conflicted with the town's surface identity and ultimately how this unique experience of the Second World War speaks to larger themes surrounding the Home Front. The contrast between Ramsgate's peacetime seaside identity and the underground society created by the Tunnels offers a unique perspective on what sense of 'normality' survived and was replicated in this subterranean setting. The setting of the Tunnels themselves act as a physical metaphor for the underground experience which engages naturally with larger narratives surrounding the working-class experience, hygiene, leisure, and privacy. This dissertation employs a spatial history lens using the Ramsgate Tunnels' environment as a means of accessing the town's wartime experience. As a town represented by its coastal topography the transition to the underground and dramatic change in sensory experience engages with a large literature surrounding social and cultural history behind the themes of lightness and darkness.

Ramsgate's seaside identity

Through looking at the basis behind Ramsgate's distinct seaside identity one can in greater detail perceive the impact upon the residents of going underground. We can answer larger questions of how this subterranean existence contradicted certain fundamental philosophies of the town which were spatially determined. This naturally engages with the theory that sites possess a form of agency as shown in their inherent ability to influence emotions and behaviour. Environmental researcher Catherine Kelly highlights emotional attachment to the seaside as an optimal example of the environmental psychology

of 'lived space'.[115] Kelly describes these spaces as 'therapeutic landscapes' as the environment itself creates an atmosphere which is not only conducive for healing but creates an intangible emotional relationship with the person.[116] Thus the coastal scene possesses a certain degree of emotional agency over not only human perception but behaviour as the seaside over time has become a site of pilgrimage for tranquillity and rehabilitation.[117] Performing certain cultural rituals of the seaside experience such as sea bathing evoke positive feelings which upon reflection stirs a longing to return to the sea.[118] Open blue spaces have a long history of being associated with solace and healing through the power of the awe-inspiring sublime natural sea vistas.[119]

Ramsgate's coastal sublime identity was also one of defence originating from the town's historic island identity. The Isle of Thanet was at one point an island separated from mainland Kent by the Wantsum Channel. The historic marina towns that form Thanet such as Ramsgate retained a sense of difference from the rest of the nation due to their ancestral island identity.[120] If Kent was the 'Garden of England' then the population of Thanet were the garden's gatekeepers. Ramsgate, like Dover, was a historic port, staring out at the shores of Dunkirk; for generations the town was in constant communication with continental Europe. Local historian Bob Ogley argues that it was greater proximity to 'occupied Europe' than their own capital city that provoked the county's survivalist spirit.[121] This priority of self-preservation manifested within the county as an embracing of the subterranean and a long legacy of tunnelling dating back to the Napoleonic era. However, this subterranean aspect of Thanet also facilitated a long tradition of smuggling and other subversive local underground activity. Remnants of that activity still scar the geography of Ramsgate today; the area rests upon an unknown number of Tunnels and caves that stretch across the town.[122] The county's preoccupation with self-

[115] Catherine Kelly, 'I Need the Sea and the Sea Needs Me': Symbiotic coastal policy narratives for human wellbeing and sustainability in the UK', *Marine Policy*, Vol.97 (2018), 223-231 (p.223).
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid. p. 230.
[118] Ibid. pp. 228-230.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Hamish Reid, *BBC-Kent-History-Isle of Thanet* [Online]. BBC, 24 September 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/content/articles/2006/05/15/thanet_history_feature.shtml> [Accessed on: 10 January 2020].
[121] Bob Ogley, *Kent at War: The Unconquered County, 1939-1945* (Westerham: Froglets Publications 1994), p.3.
[122] 'Going Down in History', *Kent Life*, April 1995, p.25.

defence was inspired by Kent's mythology as the 'unconquerable county' whose common man took up arms against William the Conqueror. This story of the people's fight and defence for their ancient rights and liberties was immortalised in the county's defiant motto *Invicta.* This ancient spirit of defiance and resistance was reignited during the Second World War.

How the subterranean shelter network which became the Ramsgate Tunnels came to exist was the combination of two major influences. The first was the town's taste of modern warfare during the First World War which inspired the fundamental need for the shelter, and the second which inspired the design blueprints for the Tunnels was the deep level shelter advancements that had thrived during the Spanish Civil War in cities such as Alicante. It was Richard 'Dick' Brimmell, Ramsgate's Borough Engineer, who masterminded this union between the town's experience and anticipation of more aerial bombardment with the very latest in modern technological air raid precautions. The road to the final construction and completion of the Tunnels was a long arduous one spanning over a year of applications. However, Brimmell's faith in the subterranean won in the end. With a second war on the horizon Ramsgate's residents, led by the designs of Brimmell and the charisma of their Mayor A.B.C Kempe, turned to their land and soil for protection. This echoed Ramsgate's town motto '*salus naufragis salus aegris*' ('refuge for the shipwrecked and health for the sick').

Ramsgate's experience of the First World War

Whilst the First World War was being fought over the channel in the fields of Flanders, the population of Ramsgate experienced first-hand the devastating consequences of aerial warfare that saw the front line no longer earthly bound. Archaeologist Niall Finneran defines the relationship between the seascape and its populace as a very intimate relationship as for the population the landscape is redolent with meaning and memory.[123] The seaside has held an 'affectionate place' throughout national memory but for those maritime communities it was the anchor of their identity.[124] Finneran argues that here one must employ the theory of phenomenology or the 'archaeology of experience' as a means to engage

[123] Niall Finneran, 'Beside the Seaside. The Archaeology of the Twentieth-Century English Seaside Holiday Experience: A Phenomenological Context', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 21: No. 3 (2017), 533–557 (p.534).
[124] Ibid.pp.534-6.

with these sites imbued with emotion and therefore connected to its residents through shared experiences. The materiality of the space constructs and informs the experience of the seaside through a series of tangible and intangible structures.[125] These structures not only condition the behaviour and experience of the seascape but evoke 'distinctive emotional cues' through the natural sensory triggers of the coast: sun, sea, sand, and architecture.[126] Finneran asserts that humans throughout time have possessed a deep emotional attachment to the seascape, a connection which manifested itself in the ritualistic social migration to the coast.[127] This nostalgic affection for the seaside not only defined the experience and perception of the space but also the cultural traditions of commemoration.

The landscape represented tranquillity and restoration: to watch such destruction rain upon that previous oasis of peace and revitalisation therefore had significant emotional and mental consequences.[128] The seascape does not only mediate between land and ocean but also the cultural imagination and memory of tourists and the everyday lives of the maritime communities.[129] The consequences of the unexpected raids that defined the First World War for Ramsgate not only physically scarred the town, but it also psychologically traumatised the residents. However, the damage jeopardised the economic backbone of Ramsgate as a coastal resort destination thus the residents' personal grief was met with larger fears over the future of the town. On 15 February 1937 a local newssheet titled 'On The Town' was distributed around Ramsgate; provided a summary of the town's First World War experience with a particular focus on Air Raid Precautions. This newssheet highlighted the three aerial bombardments the seaside town endured between 17 May 1915 and 20 July 1918, which destroyed the local hotel 'The Bull and George' and culminated in an estimated bill of collective private property damage around £80,000 (equivalent today to £4,575,856.).[130] The raids claimed 24 civilian victims and left 51 wounded, thus the newssheet concluded with the definitive message that Air Raid Precautions were 'vitally necessary'.[131]

[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.p.553.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.p.534.
[129] Ibid.p.553.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

On both of my visits to the Ramsgate Tunnels, on the 29 August 2019 and 23 October 2020, the tour guides began with the request for the party to remember the number 28. Then once deep into the darkness of the Tunnel it would be revealed that at the heart of the community's memory was the 28 bombs dropped and the 28 lives they claimed. This specific figure might have originated from the raid on the 22 August 1917 or known locally as the 'worst daylight raid in Thanet' when 28 bombs were dropped on the town.[132] Subsequently that which the community took away from their experience of the First World War was a fatal one-to-one ratio of bomb to victim which fuelled the desire to establish a deep level shelter system in preparation for a second round of aerial bombardment.

However, there was one particular story that held an undisputed position of importance in the collective memory of the town and was believed to be behind Mayor Kempe's description of the 'bad time Ramsgate had had during the last war'.[133] This 'bad time', encapsulated in the events of the 19 March 1916, would become a major part of the campaign for the subterranean shelter network. The Saxby siblings Gladys and James, only six and four-years-old, had stopped to watch German seaplanes fly over. Unbeknownst to the siblings St. Luke's Avenue would be bombed during this raid, killing Gladys, James, and three other children en route to the parish church.[134] The shocking deaths of the children attending Sunday School entrenched Ramsgate's belief that in total war no one had a protected status and the town was determined to ensure that it was better prepared to face a second war.

The air raids Ramsgate endured during First World War resulted in it being given the title of the 'most bombed' town in England.[135] Ramsgate's rich history of smuggling and tunnelling meant that the local population was well versed in its subterranean topography. This knowledge became vital during the many raids when the populace unofficially took shelter in underground spaces scattered around Ramsgate. Therefore it was this lived experience and earlier use of underground sheltering which explains why the population during the Second World War embraced going underground so

[132] Ibid. p.373.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Joy Smithers, *'8.The First World War (1914-1918)*, [Online]. St. Luke's Ramsgate, 7 November 2016, <https://www.stlukesramsgate.org/history-of-st-lukes/8-the-first-world-war-1914-1918?fbclid=IwAR3fsgdc4vwnuk75ojwxjkguIbdZg8y304NjU9ula7pCFKNadDOOzzPDx20> [Accessed on: 15 January 2021].
[135] Ibid.

instinctively and understood that the subterranean promised to give 'absolute security from all sorts of air attack'.[136] The First World War saw the early subterranean sheltering attempts which were major influences as to what would become the Ramsgate Tunnels such as the use of the Cliff Railway Tunnel, known later as the disused Railway Tunnel, for both civilian sheltering and wounded Belgian soldiers.[137] The Ramsgate Society attributed inspiration for the Ramsgate Tunnels to the efforts of the Ramsgate Corporation's primitive bomb-proof dug outs which sheltered around 20,000 residents during the First World War.[138] The foundation of the Ramsgate Tunnels was rooted in the resident's belief in the potential of the subterranean sanctuary. Ramsgate responded to the early signs of a second war on the horizon by using their previous experience of aerial combat to inform and evolve their communal preparations. At the top of their preparations was to utilise the full potential of the subterranean sanctuary. The inspiration for what would later become the structural blueprint for the Tunnels originated in Spain.

The influence of the Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War had proven the lifesaving potential of underground shelters which did not escape the attention of the Borough Engineer Richard 'Dick' Danger Brimmell B.Sc.,A.M.I.C.E when designing the Ramsgate Tunnels. The Ramsgate Tunnels Heritage Group's newsletter *Tunnel Times* asserts continuously Brimmell's foresight to begin designs for the Tunnels in 1936 taking heed of the potentiality of a 'second war to be fought in a generation'.[139] His focus on creating the Ramsgate Tunnels was thought to have been inspired by the deep level shelter network of tunnels built beneath Spanish cities including Alicante during the Spanish Civil War to protect the civilian population.[140] Even in 1940, publications such as *Picture Post* had placed in dialogue with each other, the Barcelonan

[136] 'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters: Deep shelters give complete protection from air raids. Ramsgate has got them', *Picture Post*, 5 October 1940, p. 1.
[137] Ramsgate Historical Society, '*9.Ramsgate Cliff Railway'* [Online]. Kent in WW1, 2014-2017, <http://kentww1.com/ramsgate/> [Accessed on: 12 January 2021].
[138] The Ramsgate Society, p.366.
[139] *Tunnel Times*, [Online Newsletter] Ramsgate Tunnels Heritage Group, Issue 1, August 2011, <http://ramsgatetunnels.org/newsletter/newsletter_1.pdf> [Accessed on: 12 January 2021].
[140] B. González Avilés, M. I. Pérez Millan, and A. L. Rocamora Ruiz, 'Reuse of Spanish civil war air-war shelter in Alicante: the R46 Balmis and R31 Seneca shelter', Defense Sites III: Heritage and Future, Building Constructions Department, *WIT Transactions on The Built Environment*, Vol.158 (2016), 107 – 116 (p.107).

underground shelters which had withstood the 'heaviest' bombing of the Spanish Civil War and the Ramsgate Tunnels which had 'defied' the German's efforts in the 'worst bombing in history'.[141] Between 1937 and 1938, multiple British Engineers and scientists travelled to visit Spain to examine the deep level shelters created during the Spanish Civil War for the protection of the civilian population. One of the most famous observers at the time was scientist J.B.S Haldane, who had spent time watching the shelters in action himself. In 1938 Haldane published the widely circulated handbook *ARP*, the book was written to extensively equip and help the 'ordinary citizen' on how to take personal responsibility of their own safety against the deadly consequences of aerial bombardment.[142] Haldane in the book's preface explains that he was compelled by what he had witnessed in Spain and felt the weight of the innocent civilian blood that would be on his hands if he did not do all in his power to 'save the people of Britain' from the fate of those in Spain.[143]

There is no known record of Brimmell personally visiting the Spanish underground shelters nor any explicit references to Haldane's book. But there is reason enough to suppose that Brimmell would have been aware of the book and that it would have had direct influence upon the original designs for the underground Ramsgate Tunnels.[144] A key piece of evidence to suggest this is in the matching dimensional specifications between the Ramsgate Tunnels and the ideal underground shelters that Haldane describes: at least 60 feet underground, with a height of seven feet and a width of six feet. Two additional features of the designs of the Ramsgate Tunnels mirror direct recommendations from Haldane: the first was building from an already existing underground Railway structure, the second, which was the most compelling was the planning of anti-gas preventions. Haldane goes into extensive detail in *ARP* about the dangers of numerous different gases. This would explain why there was such great effort put into ensuring each entrance of the Ramsgate Tunnels was fitted with steel gas-proof air-locking doors.[145] Haldane makes explicitly clear throughout *ARP* that the British Government was not

[141] 'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters', p.1.
[142] J.B.S. Haldane, F.R.S, *ARP* (London: Victor Gollancz 1938), p.1.
[143] Ibid.
[144] *'Air Raid Shelters: A Short History of British Air-Raid Shelters WW1 and WW2'* [Online]. Military History Matters,1 October, 2010, <https://www.military-history.org/articles/air-raid-shelters.htm> [Accessed on: 12 January 2021].
[145] 'Going Down in History', p. 25.

prepared for the reality of aerial bombardment. He encouraged vehemently that the people must be self-reliant for their ensured protection. This was echoed in the words of Ramsgate's Mayor Kempe who described the Tunnels as the answer to the 'question of protection for our people', a question Ramsgate's population had come to believe it was theirs to answer and not to rely on the Government to solve.[146] Brimmell built upon this inspiration through taking full advantage of the coastal topography ensuring there were entrances that faced out upon the seafront to create natural ventilation of fresh sea air.[147] He advanced the Spanish deep level shelter network example by mapping the Tunnel design against the geography of Ramsgate thereby creating a three-mile semi-circular network that encircled the breadth of the town. The methodological planning meant that anywhere in the town was within five minutes of one of the twenty-three entrances.[148] Life above was mirrored underground to the extent the Tunnels even had their own signposts as shown in Figure Four.[149]The labyrinth of underground Tunnels created a subterranean Ramsgate as one could trace the same routes of the surface but underground.

[146]Ald. A.B.C Kempe, *Midst Bands and Bombs by the 'Top – Hat' Mayor of Ramsgate*, 1946, (Ramsgate: Michaels Bookshop, 2006), p.14.
[147] 'Kent's Seaside Town's £45,000 Tunnel Refuge', *Kent Messenger*, 25 March 1939, p.1.
[148] Ibid.
[149] 'Going Down in History', p. 25.

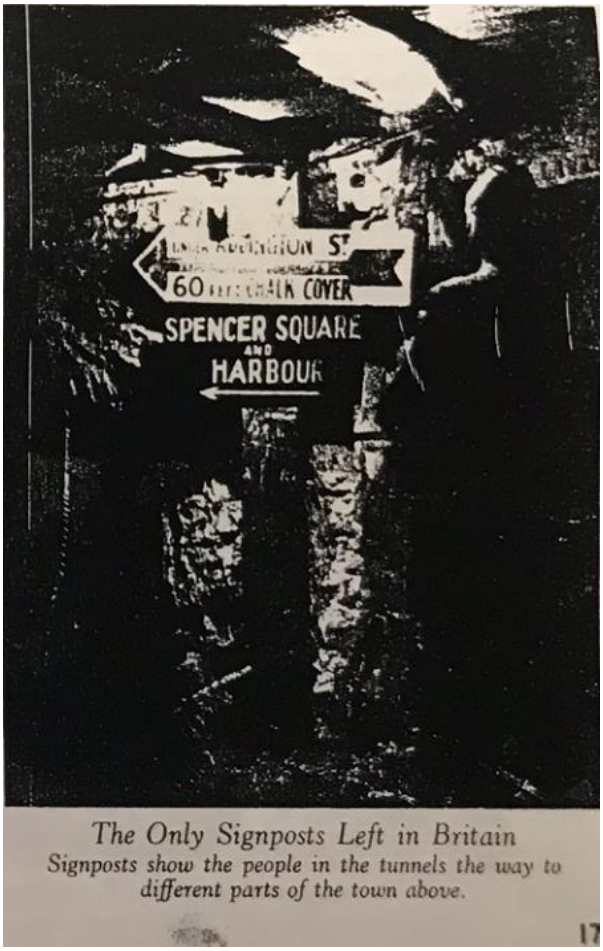

Figure 4'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters: Deep shelters give complete protection from air raids. Ramsgate has got them'. 5 October 1940, Picture Post.

Under the coastal defence policy all signposting had been removed from Kent and around the nation in fear of invasion. By this definition quite possibly the tunnel's signposts were the last active signposts in Britain, reinforcing a sense of normality but also fostering a working underground society. The subterranean community could navigate themselves from one end of the town to the other with ease following the surface roads and landmarks underground.[150] The act of re-erecting their signposts underground was part of the larger movement by the town in furnishing their 'Tunnel Town', buried beneath their surface homes or what remained of their previous surface lives.

[150] Ibid.

The campaign for permission

The 'Tunnels Refuge' as the press christened the Ramsgate Tunnels was the first scheme of its kind to be approved by the Home Secretary Sir John Anderson.[151] The same Anderson to whom the common Air Raid Precaution (ARP), the Anderson shelter – a steel structure erected in back gardens as a shelter to accommodate a family during aerial bombardment – was named after. The £45,000 proposed scheme, which today would amount to £3,048,867, promised to provide 'complete' protection of the town's population for any air raid. However, the official published reasons for why the scheme achieved approval on the 20 March 1939 was due to cost and the geography of the town.[152] The high cost of the proposed provision of sufficient basement shelters made the communal shelter far more desirable in addition to the inapplicability for a large proportion of the borough for the installation of steel householders' shelters such as the Anderson shelter.[153]

There is not a clear or definitive timeline from Brimmell's initial idea of the Tunnels to the eventual scheme which received governmental approval in March 1939. Whereas Dover's unsuccessful applications for permission to construct Tunnels have survived, Ramsgate's ARP Tunnel applications have not been preserved. In the official Dover application there is mention of the Ramsgate Tunnels as an example of the potential for interconnected tunnel systems. However there has been preserved in the collective memory of the town the tale of Brimmell's three campaigns and his tireless efforts to ensure the official adoption of the tunnel scheme.[154] Brimmell's series of campaigning to the Home Office coincided around the same time as some larger Second World War events. An immensely popular magazine at the time *Picture Post* dated Brimmell's first campaign in the spring of 1938 around the same time as Hitler's seizing of Austria.[155] The first official rejection from the Home Office was on the grounds that the plans were 'premature'.[156] In the autumn of 1938 Brimmell launched his second attempt

[151] 'Kent's Seaside Town's £45,000 Tunnel Refuge', p.1.
[152] Ibid.
[153] 'Lord Privy Seal's View: The Letter From the Home Office Announcing Approval of the Scheme', *Kent Messenger*, 25 March 1939, p.1.
[154] Ibid.
[155] 'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters', p.1.
[156] Ibid.

despite Britain being in relative peace after the Munich Agreement which was signed on 30 September 1938. The timing of his second attempt reflected Brimmell's pessimistic views on the likely success of Chamberlain's appeasement policy, especially as Brimmell was driven by the need for Ramsgate to not again be caught out by unpreparedness for modern warfare. Although this intuitive reaction would later be proven correct this second attempt was also rejected. The final and successful attempt was submitted on 15 March 1939 around the time of the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. An application at this time when the invasion proved that appeasement was futile gave the much-needed sense of urgency for war preparations.[157] Key to why Brimmell and the town were so steadfast in their convictions for the Tunnels scheme was that the consequences of aerial bombardment for the town were not theoretical; Ramsgate had lived through this already.

In his lengthy hard-won campaign Brimmell received assistance from the eccentric Mayor Kempe who would later in his 1946 memoir position himself as central to the successful application, downplaying Brimmell's role. Kempe acknowledges that the Tunnels scheme was Brimmell's idea. However, Kempe describes how it was after he committed his energy and weight to the campaign as Mayor that the scheme succeeded.[158] He enlisted the MP for Thanet at the time, Captain. H.H. Balfour, who then arranged an interview with the Home Office. Kempe gives credit to MP Balfour as the reason for not only achieving an audience with Sir John Anderson but for convincing Anderson on the principle of the proposal.[159] Also involved in the campaign to the Government was Brimmell, the Town Clerk, the Chief Constable, Alderman J.T. Huddlestone chairman of Ramsgate A.R.P. Committee and representatives from Margate whom had also evolved their own scheme.[160] It is here in Kempe's personal description of events that he takes centre stage in the campaign, recalling telling the Governmental officials before him that they had 'come up here to-day meaning business!' before speaking for fifteen minutes explaining their case. [161] Kempe does acknowledge how 'wonderful' Brimmell's plans were and that his arguments 'helped a lot'. However, Kempe does this only in passing,

[157] Ibid.
[158] Kempe, *Midst Bands and Bombs*, pp. 15-30.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

concluding his account with his own efforts with the chairman that resulted in the approval.[162] The resistance against subterranean shelters that the Ramsgate Tunnels also faced originated from fears over subversive subterranean mentalities that would be fostered in the underground spaces. In addition, the endorsement from the British Communist Party of underground shelters, after the pivotal role underground sheltering played during the Spanish Civil War, did not lessen concerns about the socially corrosive nature of dark and damp underground spaces.[163]

The process of construction: a town building its own defences

Within days of receiving Whitehall's permission on 20 March 1939 work officially began on the tunnels.[164] Mayor Kempe had promised the community that the construction of the Tunnels would be split between local labour and the civil contractor Francois Cementation Co. Ltd.[165] First was the repurposing of the disused Railway Tunnel, which was to become the main Tunnel of the shelter network, that was originally a section of the Kent Coast Railway opened in 1864.[166] Originally the line was created as a means for Ramsgate to compete with Margate over the seasonal tourists, as unlike Margate, Ramsgate's station was inland and did not arrive directly at the seaside. The Railway delivered tourists directly to the seafront until it was officially closed in 1926 after numerous accidents such as the infamous death of a local oyster fisherman. By 1936 until the outbreak of war the Tunnel was transformed into the seaside attraction the 'World Scenic Railway'; over 800 yards tourists were taken on an illuminated trip around the world and returned to Ramsgate.[167]

The iconic tableau of Mayor Kempe in shirtsleeves making the first impression into the chalk with a pneumatic drill became not only the image of the construction of the Tunnels, but for the press that of the 'Mad Town' and its' 'Mad Mayor' frantically tunnelling underground.[168] Beyond the

[162] Ibid.
[163] Joseph S Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.5:No.3 (1994), 300-319.
[164] 'Kent's Seaside Town's £45,000 Tunnel Refuge', p.1.
[165] *Tunnel Times.*
[166] Ibid.
[167] Martin Dixon, *Ramsgate Air Raid Shelter And Scenic Railway* [online]. Subterranea Britannica, updated 5 August 2020, <https://www.subbrit.org.uk/sites/ramsgate-air-raid-shelter-and-scenic-railway/> [Accessed on: 28 February 2021].
[168] 'Kent's Seaside Town's £45,000 Tunnel Refuge', p.1.

eccentric Mayor posing for the press the image captures also some of the local labourers that would work tirelessly night and day to create this communal safe sanctuary. Despite noise complaints from residents in June 1939 from all the construction work, the town's position was clear: the work for the creation of these Tunnels was of the greatest urgency and importance as they would save the town.[169] The first section of the Tunnels, estimated to be around 1.25km, was officially opened as early as 1 June 1939 by the Duke of Kent, just three months after the work commenced. The labour carried on for the rest of the network at the speed of 25 feet of chalk a day until the shelter was completed just before war broke out.[170] The Tunnels were carved by hand, like rabbits burrowing their warrens, the space built *by* the people of the town *for* themselves. The population of Ramsgate was not forced into the dark, cold and damp underworld of the Tunnels; instead, they willingly descended to a sanctuary that promised to protect them. The conditions in the Tunnels were considerably basic which were worsened by the persistent issues with both heating and consistent lighting as only the main Railway Tunnel had access to a generator.[171] Despite this by October 1941 the Tunnels had regularly over four thousand residents sleeping in the shelter each night with a further demand for an additional 1500 bunks.[172]

It was the promise of the 'absolute' protection from the underground world that saw the creation of the subterranean Ramsgate society that existed in the Tunnels. Ramsgate's 'Tunnel Town' grew from the initial provisions of Elsan lavatories every 75 feet, emergency first aid posts and two-tier wooden bed bunks. [173] The Tunnels obtained its domestic aesthetic from the efforts of the locals over time to bring down their own belongings or what they could salvage to furnish their claimed sections of the Tunnels. Here the subterranean was a designed and personalised sanctuary space which was decorated and lived in by the very people that had made and fought for it. The tunnel's population capacity of sixty thousand was not only double Ramsgate's peacetime population but four times its wartime one.[174] The reason the town's population halved during the Second World War was partly due to official

[169] 'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters', p.1.
[170] Ibid. p.1.
[171] Nick Catford, *The Ramsgate Tunnels: Main line Public Air-Raid Shelter & Scenic Railway* (Ramsgate: Michaels Bookshop, 2005), p.5.
[172] 'Over 4,000 Sleep In Ramsgate Tunnels', *Kent Messenger*, 31 October 1941, p.1.
[173] 'Going Down In History', p.25.
[174] Ibid.

evacuation efforts to move children away from the target areas. There was also a percentage of the town's population who, due to their previous experience of the First World War, chose to leave on their own accord early and retreat inland. Ramsgate's seaside identity meant that the town relied upon its seasonal economy; however, the prospect of war deterred all forms of its coastal tourism. Many metropolitan areas such as London, Glasgow and Manchester had attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to obtain governmental sanction and funding to create their own deep level shelters.[175] Even Margate's plans were rejected by the Home Office as their need for Tunnels 'was less compelling' than Ramsgate's.[176] However, it was not simply the fact Ramsgate had an underground shelter which made its wartime experience so unique; it was the fact it had created a subterranean version of their town underneath the original.

The duality of Ramsgate's seaside identity

In the summer of 1939 two distinct Ramsgate identities existed in the same moment, the classic seaside surface and the burgeoning subterranean. On 31st July 1939 the famous 'Ramsgate Tea Party' was held. *The Kent Messenger* would later report that the 'Mad Mayor' Kempe had invited 1,000 guests to come down and have a 'tea and bun with him on the beach.' Over 30,000 turned up.[177] The Mayor was quoted as relishing the prospect of welcoming the 'workers of England' just like he had done for royalty, taking particular pleasure in entertaining those that had travelled to Ramsgate and 'spent their money with us'.[178] This industry of seaside entertainment was the backbone of Ramsgate's economy. The Mayor's competitive edge was to embrace a paternal persona to express the unique 'personal interest' the town invested in its tourists.[179] During their stay Kempe asked the tourists to 'look on me as your father' and when leaving to say 'cheerio Pa'.[180] Footage of the day captured the hordes of holiday goers covering

[175] Ibid.
[176] 'Margate Shelter Scheme Rejected: Why Home Office Turned Down Tunnel Project', *Kent Messenger,* 25 March 1939, p.1.
[177] 'Ramsgate Mayor Mobbed On Beach', *Kent Messenger* 5 August 1939, pp.3-4.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

the span of the beach. Wading through the excited crowds is the eccentric Mayor dressed in his iconic finery of his chain of office and 'Top Hat' overwhelmed by mountains of buns, teacups, and people.[181]

The reel documented a very distinct moment in Ramsgate's seaside history as this was just a month after the first section of the deep level shelter network had been officially opened. In the civil defence planning committee there was, as Susan R. Grayzel highlighted, a consideration to the 'type of population' when considering the potential consequences of air raids. The experience of Margate during the First World War suggested that for coastal communities the economic consequences of air raids 'could be as devastating as their psychological ones'.[182] Seaside towns such as Margate or Ramsgate were 'entirely dependent' upon the seasonal income therefore during the First World War these communities suffered 'acute financial distress' from the loss of tourism.[183] Therefore Ramsgate was balancing these economic priorities whilst carrying on with preparations for the worst-case scenario which complicated theories about the overwhelming shadow of war consuming daily life leading up to the outbreak of war. Ramsgate was a liminal space between the hive of action on the seashore front and the maze of underground Tunnels mapping the town being completed. Within weeks of the newsreel being taken the sandy beaches were lined with anti-invasion barbed wire and mines. Here most clearly is illustrated the duality of Ramsgate's identity as both a seaside holidaying paradise and as a defensive front line mounted upon the historic white cliff ramparts staring out at occupied Europe.

There was also a large shift between pre-Second World War representations of Ramsgate as the destination for health, purity and pleasure and its depiction during the war when its identity became tethered to its subterranean existence, with all the stigma surrounding the underground. This subterranean identity was attached to imagery of the underworld and sewers and was depicted as dark, claustrophobic, disease-ridden spaces, the direct antithesis of Ramsgate's pre-war identity. If the underground suggested imagery of death, then the spirit of the seaside evoked what Fyfe calls the 'intensity of [the] gladness in being alive'.[184] The recuperative powers of the seaside were widely

[181] *'Ramsgate Tea Party 1939'* [Online Video] British Pathe Archive, issue date 3 August 1939, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ramsgate-tea-party/query/ramsgate> [Accessed on: 12 January 2021].
[182] Susan R.Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.129.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Hamilton Fyfe, *Brighton: The Official Handbook 1939-1940* (Brighton: Brighton Corporation, 1940), p.2.

believed: all manners of conditions and diseases were thought to be treated through a trip to the seashore. At the heart of the allure of the seaside was the proclaimed 'elixir of life': the sea air.[185] The mythical and scientific claims attached to respite on the coast had led to seaside destinations such as Ramsgate becoming sites of pilgrimage for physical health but also psychological 'tranquillity' and peace.[186] John Hassan, in his work addressing the phenomenon of the seaside since 1800 as possessing authority on medicine and health, highlights the fundamental and persistent grand 'pseudo-scientific' claims which were at the heart of contemporary coastal tourist propaganda.[187] Why so many flocked to the golden-sand banks of Ramsgate every season was because of the promise of escape. Plastered across train advertisements were illustrations of the Heliopolis (City of the Sun) only a matter of hours away. The Romantic literary movement had a large influence at the time of promoting the embrace of the natural sublime as a remedy to the toxins of modern progress. A major theme of the 'pseudo-scientific' propaganda Hassan analyses is the notion of the health benefits from the return to the pastoral and the majestic. Key writers at the time such as Edward Roland Williams helped to forge an association between the yearning for the natural world and a wider symbolic national identity. Williams describes how the yearn for the 'old sweet rhythms of life' was not just as a means of escape from the industrial landscape but a nostalgia for a golden pastoral past which articulated a certain 'patriotic spirituality'.[188] The effect of this idealisation and romanticism was that sites of natural splendour were engulfed with tourism. Born out of this 'new spirit of pilgrimage' such spaces became the 'soul' of British literature and therefore British life.[189]

This powerful desire to escape to the coastal shores was rooted in the very spaces the British populace was trying to flee: the pollution, stress and dirt of the twentieth-century metropolitan city. The Industrial Revolution had seen the migration of large masses from the pastoral agricultural landscapes to the industrial centres, from just 20% of the national population living in urban centres in 1801 to 80%

[185] John Hassan, *'The Seaside, Health and the Environment in England and Wales Since 1800'* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2003), pp.75-76.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid. p.76.
[188] Ibid. p.105.
[189] Ibid.

by 1901.[190] The rise of industrial production saw the rapid worsening of pollution and air quality which directly damaged both the natural landscape and the population's health.[191] Major respiratory diseases and complaints such as bronchitis and tuberculosis ravaged the urban labouring population.[192]

In an 1890 essay entitled 'Sunlight or Smoke?' for *The Contemporary Review,* Anglican priest, politician and conservationist Hardwick. D. Rawnsley expressed his concerns about the state of industrial metropolis living conditions which saw the mouths of poor children 'lined with soot'.[193] Rawnsley immortalised the labouring classes at the time as the 'desolate sunlessness of a smoke-smitten people' inhabitants of a poisonous realm mirroring a depiction from Dante's Inferno.[194] What he had witnessed led Rawnsley to campaign for employers' acknowledgement of their responsibility towards the betterment of the living conditions and well-being of their workers. He went on to directly link exposure to sunshine as resulting in 'health', 'joy', which was evident in the very 'sight of their eyes' and the 'abundance' of mortal days.[195] This association of light exposure and good health was part of a much larger contemporary international European medical trend.[196] Major figures in this trend towards the medical benefits of sun worship were Henry Gauvain, a medical superintendent, and Dr. Caleb Saleeby, who advocated ardently for the use of sunlight exposure as a beneficial treatment in interwar Britain. Gauvain even went as far as writing a 'eulogy to the benefits of sunlight' that was inspired by Dr. Auguste Rollier's seminal 1914 book *La Cure de Soleil* (The Cure of the Sun).[197] The *British Journal of Nursing* in 1921, during the revival in the advocacy for health benefits of the 'Sun Cure', described how Dr. Rollier's work embraced the 'magnificent spell of sunshine' (sunlight treatment) as the means to combat the modern 'diseases of darkness' such as surgical tuberculosis.[198] Dr. Saleeby in his work defined the 'diseases of darkness' as the repercussions of the metropolitan slums which were

[190] Hassan, '*The Seaside'*, p.80.
[191] Ibid.p.79.
[192] Ibid.p.76-9.
[193] H.D. Rawnsley, 'Sunlight or Smoke?', *Contemporary Review*, 57 (April 1890), pp.512-24 (p.516).
[194] Ibid.p.512.
[195] Ibid.pp.522-524.
[196] Auguste Rollier, *La cure de soleil* (Paris: Baillère & Fils, 1914); John Hannavy, *Britain's Working Coast in Victorian and Edwardian Times*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).
[197] Simon Carter, *Rise and Shine: Sunlight, Technology and Health* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), p.58.
[198] Ethel Gordon Bedford Fenwick (eds*.), '*La Cure De Soleil: The Sun as a Prophylactic', *The British Journal of Nursing*, Vol 67: No. 1,746 (17 September 1921), p.173.

'darkest on earth' due to the pollution and smog.[199] Formulating distinctive links between light and health and darkness with death, Gauvain emphasised the power of sun exposure, contrasting the fundamental nature of 'healthy mortals to love light' with 'the darkness of the tomb' as synonymous with 'death'.[200] Therefore all 'terrestrial life' must crave the 'golden rays' which are the 'world's great tonic' to 'stimulate and enliven' the mortal body and spirit.[201] Thus the subterranean Ramsgate highlighted the shift in the town's relationship with the sky and underground as during the Second World War the population spent the majority of their time in the darkness and little on the sunny surface.

Medical historian Tania Anne Woloshyn analysed the contemporary press coverage and public reception to the medical trend of 'therapeutic light'.[202] In May 1928, *The Times* released a hugely popular supplement *'*Sunlight and Health', which lay out the 'central role' of light in all 'notions of health', 'disease' and 'pleasure'.[203] The supplement acknowledges the transformation of natural light into a 'commodity', the forging of sunlight as something 'to be possessed and consumed' like a pharmaceutically-manufactured remedy that could be purchased.[204] Coastal resorts offered the opportunity to buy such sunshine remedies, profiting on the firm consensus manifesto of 'light is, literally, life'.[205] Woloshyn asserts that the reason behind the quick uptake of light therapy was the 'English Disease'; because of a predominately wet and cold climate and urban pollution, the populace were 'starved for light' and were 'remarkably receptive' to the 'therapeutic potential' of light exposure.[206]In his investigation of the construction of British national identity, historian Paul Readman notes the relationship between urban-industrial development and the cultural value society places upon the natural landscape. He concluded that increase in 'idealisation' of the rural landscape was part of an inverse relationship with the rise of the 19th and 20th century modernity. Thus, as Britain became

[199] Hassan, '*The Seaside',* p.8.
[200] Simon Carter, '*Rise and Shine: Sunlight, Technology and Health',* p.58.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Woloshyn, Tania Anne, *Soaking Up The Rays*: *Light therapy and visual culture in Britain, c. 1890–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp 1-30.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

increasingly more urbanised it simultaneously emphasised the therapeutic potential of the seaside.[207] The 'power and seduction of the coastal escape' was undeniably particularly effective post-First World War as the nation was rebuilding the recuperative call of the miles of 'golden sand' was heard across the nation.[208]

The cost of this mounting popularity was overdevelopment fuelled by desires to profit from the booming industry of coastal and health tourism. This took a direct toll on the local environment and population, as the ravaging inflicted upon the coastal landscape directly resulted from the abuse of the 'natural capacity' of the environment to process and contain the mounting amounts of sewage and pollution.[209] There were attempts made towards preservation by groups like the Coastal Protection Council (CPC). However, Hassan concludes that the issue at the heart of these failures was the economic reliance of seaside towns upon their seasonal incomes.[210] Local all year around populations could not compromise their income on the basis of conservation alone. Interestingly, the CPC even took their campaign about the conditions of the seaside to the Health Minister in 1938 indicating that the looming fear of war had not entirely consumed all Governmental concerns.[211] In the creation of Ramsgate as a health and recreational destination the local landscape and population suffered due to the demands and usage by the seasonal tourists. There was always a level of tension between the maritime communities and their seasonal tourists 'invasion' upon which the local population was financially dependent.[212]

Ramsgate's Blitz

During the Second World War both literally and symbolically the white cliffs of the South-East became the nation's front line. Facing occupied Europe, the fate of the white chalk cliffs became the fate of Britain. Historian Martin J. Wiener highlights that this link between national identity and the white south-eastern cliffs had ancient links as Britain's historic synonym Albion refers to the white cliffs as

[207] Paul Readman,'"The Cliffs are not Cliffs": The Cliffs of Dover and National Identities in Britain, c.1750-c.1950', *History,* Vol.99: No.335 (2014), 241-69 (p.262).
[208] Hassan, '*The Seaside'*, pp.108 – 109.
[209] Ibid. pp.121-123.
[210] Ibid. p.119.
[211] Ibid. pp.119-20.
[212] Ibid. p.119.

the Latin origins of the name *albus* meant white.[213] The iconic 1942 song '(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover' by Vera Lynn asserted in the national consciousness that the nation was being fought for over the south-eastern coast.[214] The picturesque coast was transformed into symbols of national defence: the cliffs became 'ramparts' and its south-eastern populace the guardians of the nation.[215]

The endurance and fortitude of the seaside towns became entangled with the resilience of the nation. The British illustrated news publication *The Sphere* reached particular popularity and mass readership during the Second World War. On 21 September 1940, the publication bestowed Ramsgate two epithets: the 'safest' but also 'Britain's worst bombed' town.[216] This informed the wider perception at the time of Ramsgate's brunt of the war. There was much published in the press about 'Ramsgate's worst day of the war' which is how the town had come to remember 24 August 1940. Five hundred bombs were dropped on the picturesque seaside town in under five minutes.[217] Afterwards, residents came to their own explanation of events that day: a leading German bomber plane was shot down by a trawler docked in the Ramsgate Harbour. This resulted in the retribution by the remaining bombers who dropped their entire load on the town. The attack caught the imagination of the press, as the seaside town was portrayed as the 'most unfortunate recipient' of the 'venom' and 'spite' of Göring.[218] These published descriptions of the raid helped cement the town's own versions of events into folklore. Despite bearing witness to one of the 'fiercest' raids of the war, seeing no less than 1,222 of its houses raised to the ground, there were remarkably only 31 casualties.[219]

The reason why Ramsgate also received the epithet of the 'safest' town was due to the 'Godsend': the Ramsgate Tunnels.[220] The scale of raids against the size of the seaside town led to growing public interest in the underground labyrinth which preserved the town. The American War

[213] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 249.
[214] '(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover', Lyricist Nat Burton, Composer: Walter Kent (Glenn Miller November, 1941).
[215] Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, p. 254.
[216] 'In Ramsgate To-Day: Life in Britain's Most Heavily Bombed Town', *The Sphere*, 21 September 1940, p.376.
[217] Ibid. p.1.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.

Correspondent H.R. Knickerbocker who found himself in the autumn of 1940 on the isle of Thanet declared definitively the Ramsgate Tunnels as the 'best air raid shelter in the world'.[221]

Conclusion

The subterranean Ramsgate which was cultivated in Ramsgate Tunnels existed during a specific moment in the town' cultural memory: when the underground was safer and more familiar than the surface. The spatial metamorphosis the maritime community went through during this period was evocative of the much larger national transformation which occurred under the arrival of total warfare. This chapter focused not only on the creation of this subterranean existence but the process the community went through of reconciling this new and somewhat alien reality and identity. Ramsgate's identity historically has always been in conversation with its topography, from its original island status to its rich lineage of smuggling and tunnelling. This historical and geographical background in combination with the foresight of the community to apply the lessons from the First World War and the Spanish Civil War facilitated the adoption of the subterranean, in turn creating a strikingly unique example of civilian experience on the Home Front during the Second World War. Through focusing on the conflict between the town's pre-war identity and its subterranean existence and how the sheltering population adapted, this chapter engaged in a new way with the working-class experience, hygiene, leisure, and privacy on the Home Front.

[221] 'Ramsgate Has Real Deep Shelters', p.1.

Chapter Two

'There's no security, or peace and tranquillity, except underground': Life inhabiting Ramsgate's Tunnel Town[222]

Through a 'chink in the curtain one might perhaps have seen a child asleep in bed'. The father sitting in an 'easy chair by a shaded light smoking a pipe' listening to the wireless or reading a paper, while the mother 'prepared a meal over an oil stove'.[223] This was how William Herbert Gibson introduced in his diary the micro-domestic worlds which had cultivated the Ramsgate Tunnels into a 'Tunnel Town'. An Assistant Rating Officer with Ramsgate Corporation at the outbreak of the Second World War, Gibson had worked on the tunnels prior to their occupation, perhaps explaining why he was so struck by their transformation. 60 feet below the seaside town in a disused Railway Tunnel, sheltering from aerial bombardment, was where Gibson captured this idyllic familial scene. The subterranean space was awash with saucepans and kettles boiling water constantly for cleaning, eating or cups of tea often tasting of paraffin.[224] This combination of the familiar with the alien was a characteristic of that which the Cultural Studies scholar David L. Pike termed the 'mythic timelessness' of the underground.[225] This cultural belief, imaginary or real, expressed the duality of the subterranean as both an organic refuge and the man-made realm of criminals.[226] From the material culture that had survived from their previous surface lives and within the parameters of the Tunnels, the Ramsgate residents created a new subterranean existence. For contemporary times, this underground living was a unique social phenomenon, one which resulted in the inhabitants being called 'Tunnel dwellers' or 'Tunnel rats'.[227]

Whilst deep sheltering has been largely defined by the experience of the London Underground during the Blitz, the Ramsgate Tunnels shared a similarity with the organisation of the Chislehurst Caves and the topography of the Victoria Tunnel in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The South Londoners who

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[222] Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in The Willows* (London: Puffin Books, 1908), p.67.
[223] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99 Life in the Tunnels: The Diary: Papers of William Herbert Gibson of Ramsgate (1939-1945), p.121.
[224] Denis Rose, *A Ramsgate Boy's Memoires of the Second World War* (Ramsgate: Michael's Bookshop, 2011), pp.9-12.
[225] David L Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800-2001* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.1.
[226] Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*, p.14.
[227] Angus Calder, *The People's War* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.181.

'colonised' the ancient Chislehurst caves mirrored Ramsgate's migration of surface life underground but on a far larger scale.[228] Each night, thousands dwelled in this underground city, within a self-contained eco-system of barbers, shops, a canteen, and a church.[229] Whilst there were some local families who set up home with double beds and armchairs the Chislehurst Caves' shelter population was constantly in flux due to the nightly designated trains which brought trekkers from the capital.[230] Therefore, due to its sheer size, the Chislehurst Caves did not share the same degree of intimacy as the Ramsgate Tunnels. Instead, the caves had an anonymity synonymous with public shelters; whilst defined as a public shelter, the Ramsgate Tunnels had the character of a private shelter.

Whilst the Chislehurst Caves shared a similar social dimension to the Ramsgate Tunnels the Victoria Tunnel, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, had the same geographical landscape. Although both the Victoria Tunnel and the Ramsgate tunnels repurposed disused Railway Tunnels, their conditions departed drastically for example while Newcastle' suffered the damp 'constantly and irremediably' Ramsgate by comparison only somewhat suffered.[231] Indeed both shared the same subterranean stoicism amongst its occupants that it was 'better damp than dead'. However, while the Newcastle populace took this stoic motto to its furthest end, sleeping on damp hessian bunks, benches, and floor, claiming they 'did not need any added degree of comfort', Ramsgate's was occupied with domesticating the space.[232] Medical inspectors in their report attributed Newcastle's stoic character as inherent to historic mining districts which were 'better fitted constitutionally to resist underground and damp conditions' therefore superior in their adaption to the environment than southerners.[233] However, this conclusion neglects the

[228] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), p.140.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Calder, *The People's War*, p.182.
[231] HO 207/1136, Ministry of Home Security NT/21/16, Regions Outside London (Headquarters' Files): Region No 1 (Northern): Newcastle-upon-Tyne: use of Victoria Tunnel as Deep Air Raid Shelter, 1941-1949, *War, State and Society* [Online] <http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.ho207/001136/001?t0=0&q0=newscastle%20tunnel&o0=and&pf=1938&pt=1957&pfm=1&ptm=12&pfrr=True&cnf=1938&cnt=1957&cnfm=1&cntm=12&cnrr=True&cvf=1938&cvt=1957&cvfm=1&cvtm=12&cvrr=True&sid=441635136&st=False&sy=False&rc=true> [Accessed on: 4 June 2021].
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

long lineage of smuggling and tunnelling on the South-East coast.[234] Therefore, while there were other deep shelters, none were both repurposed and purpose built, designed, and organised by and for a local population.

The Ramsgate Tunnels were not a static space, rather they were constantly evolving during their Second World War inhabitancy. Brian Woodland, whilst describing his wartime childhood in Ramsgate, recounted the community myth that the residents' relationship with the Tunnels changed forever after 24th August 1940, when 500 bombs were dropped on the town. The contemporary press coverage described the raid as the 'world's worst assault from the air' leading to the attack being remembered as Ramsgate's 'worst day of the war'.[235] While the reliability of wartime newspapers has been retrospectively questioned, the 500 figure has remained steadfastly synonymous with the 24th of August raid in Ramsgate's community memory. Local historian Bob Ogley is one of the few who have disputed the infamous figure instead estimating 250 high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on the town killing 31 and injuring 45.[236] Ogley argues that while the more accurate figure is smaller it still illustrates the gravity of the 24th of August as 'Ramsgate's blackest day' when approximately 11,000 were 'saved' sheltering in the Ramsgate tunnels.[237] Thus, the raid has been retrospectively attributed as the point at which people began to populate the Tunnels permanently and therefore also the trigger for the creation of the 'Tunnel Town'. Having preserved the majority of the wartime population from the raid it has been frequently employed as an explanation for why the resident population of Ramsgate lived in the Tunnels. Therefore, the Ramsgate Tunnels offer a unique case study of the civilian experience of the Home Front, not only due to the space, but also how the Tunnel population used, personalised, and transformed it.

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[234] Paul Muskett, 'English smuggling in the eighteenth century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Open University, 1997); Richard Crowhurst, 'Parsons, Scarecrows and Fear: Kent's Smuggling Heritage', *Time-Travel Britain* [Online] < https://www.timetravel-britain.com/articles/country/smuggling.shtml> [Accessed on: 7 September 2021]; Richard Platt, 'Guide-Book to South East England', *Smuggler's Britain* [Online] < http://www.smuggling.co.uk/gazetteer_se_12.html> [Accessed on: 7 September 2021].

[235] *'1940: World's First Blitz, 24th August'*, Ramsgate Tunnels [Online], <http://www.ramsgatetunnels.org/history.html> [Accessed on: 27 January 2022].

[236] Bob Ogley, *Kent At War: The Unconquered County 1939-1945*, (Westerham: Froglets Publication Ltd, 1994), p.53

[237] Ibid.

The value of such micro-histories as that of Ramsgate's is the opportunity for the recovery of accounts which have been 'lost off the map' in formal historical scholarship and historical geography. Gavin J. Andrews et al. asserted the importance of space materiality in oral testimony and memory, thereby the focus of the work is upon the geographical dimensions of everyday lives on the Home Front. Oral histories focus upon the subjective not attempting to be representative but instead to privilege individual memories. There are numerous theories such as public memory and communal memory, which speak to the plurality of accounts, but not always, cohere. Andrews et al. describes these accounts as 'anti-histories' which exist outside or in conflict with the dominant narrative.[238] In the case of events imbued with cultural mythology such as the Second World War these alternative perspectives especially have great value. Therefore, applying an oral history approach of privileging the individual, analysing the local impact of the 'Big' history offers greater access to the lived civilian experience.[239]

This chapter builds upon this thesis, focused on the Ramsgate's regional lens of how its 'Tunnel Town' experienced and negotiated the war during the everyday as a means of accessing the civilian experience of the Second World War. Central are the methods the shelterers used to domesticate and interact with the subterranean space, obtained through oral testimony, visual culture (primarily photographs and ephemera) and written accounts (both contemporary and retrospective), which act as a microcosm of the larger themes of how the Home Front related to and navigated total warfare and the everyday. This chapter's methodology builds upon Stephanie Butler's work on how women used the decoration Anderson shelters during the First World War as a means of expressing home and self.[240] The interior decoration of the Tunnels communicates in a similar way how the shelterers experienced, interacted with and found individual expression within the space. Therefore, 'Tunnel Town' represented the triumph of the Tunnels in providing a sense of security powerful enough for those bombed out to

[238] Ibid.
[239] Gavin J. Andrews, Robin A. Kearns, Pia Kontos & Viv Wilson (2006) '"Their Finest Hour": Older People, Oral Histories, and the Historical Geography of Social Life', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 7:02, 153-177 (p.170).
[240] Stephanie Butler, 'English Women at Home during the Second World War: Anderson Shelters as Domestic Spaces', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol 19:1 (2018), pp.94-104.

rebuild their homes within the subterranean. The visual and written accounts taken by Gibson provide an entirely unique perspective on how the shelterers lived, used the space, and spent their time.

Due to the paucity of surviving primary sources which document everyday life in the Tunnels, the amateur photography of Gibson has been crucial for contextual evidence. Gibson's photographs are used at the site today to interpret and read the space. Gibson's detailed documentation of the Tunnels showed the contemporary value and acknowledgement of the site's novelty. Beatriz Pichel asserts the importance of amateur photography that documented the First World War, employing Annette Kuhn's theory of the 'past-in-the-future'. Pichel argues that the photographer projects upon the subjects what they believe will be valuable in the future.[241] These images captured the domestication efforts, while seemingly illustrating banal scenes of meals and domestic chores gained a whole new significance in a wartime context.[242] Gibson's photographs of the Ramsgate Tunnels during the Second World War showed similar efforts to cultivate a sense of the home through mundane domestic rituals in spite of, and within, the chaos of wartime.[243] Gibson's documentation of life in the Tunnels was a highly curated set of photographs; images on which he projects not only his own emotions but his judgements of the space and its occupants. Photography was, as Pichel argues, an 'emotional practice' which civilians used in many ways to navigate their own feelings and make sense of what was happening.[244] The process of documentation is one of othering in that the Tunnel dwellers become anonymous subjects who have retrospectively come to represent the general experience. While these images are artefacts, the medium of the photograph is an unreliable narrator. Images such as Figure One and Two offer glimpses into a singular moment of life in the 'Tunnel Town' but due to how little documentation or material traces have survived such images have almost singlehandedly written the narrative of Ramsgate's subterranean existence. This chapter employs Journalist Phillip Gourevitch's theory of visual material as something beyond itself: as an 'invitation' for investigation and interpretation.[245] Historian Jennifer Tucker uses photographer Susan Meiselas' philosophy about photographs bringing together traces of

[241] Beatriz Pichel, *Picturing the Western Front Book: Photography, Practices and Experiences in First World War France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), p.71.
[242] Ibid. pp.77-8.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid. p.98.
[245] Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *The Ballad of Abu Ghraib* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), p.148

the past: the historian is the needle which sews these remnants together into a tapestry of the past. These photographic threads are thus part of the woven fabric of the historian's account of history; they are unravelled and reassessed to revive the past.[246] Therefore, this chapter endeavours to recover the lived experience in the Ramsgate Tunnels during the Second World War through analysing how the sheltering population lived underground.

Bringing home underground: The domestication of the Tunnels

Figure 5: The Railway Tunnel shelter as furniture was being moved in'. Taken from An Illustrated Account of Life in Ramsgate during the early years of World War II, compiled by William Herbert Gibson, the Assistant Rating Officer with Ramsgate Corporation, Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99/F11939-1941.

When the residents of Ramsgate first sought refuge in the Tunnels, they brought down deckchairs as their substitute beds; in a very real way the materials of the seaside resort found another life with the residents in the subterranean shelter. People were soon spending every night underground, and that

[246] Jennifer Tucker, 'Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry', *History and Theory*, Vol. 48: No.4 (2009), 1-8 (p.8).

which followed was a migration of surviving furniture salvaged from the surface. Residents began using their possessions, as well as their bodies, to stake their places within the Tunnel, arranging around them the surviving material evidence of their surface lives.

This migration underground was viewed by those not occupying these spaces in a negative and critical light. Sefton Delmer in his memoir offers a very evocative example as he names these subterranean habitats 'panic slums', occupied by people 'cowering' night and day in the caverns abandoning their individual and community responsibilities.[247] Here Delmer engages with the fears of the 'deep shelter mentality' which was believed to take told of the subterranean shelterer. However, Angus Calder has highlighted the exclusivity of these fears concerning only the homeless and working classes as the wealthy, for example, those who retreated to their second homes and rural areas such as the Lake District, did not succumb to the same scrutiny.[248] These 'deep shelter mentality' fears were fuelled by the powerful image of the 'chaos' of the London Underground, packed tightly with sleeping bodies on platforms and escalators.[249] Through this lens the subterranean became a space housing 'dirty unwashed humanity' which was seen by many as a self-fulling prophecy from the occupation of a realm which for centuries has housed sewers and graves.[250] The Mass Observation report *Tube Dwellers* considered that these intense contemporary reactions to the inhabitancy of the underground, was the result of 'civilized families' experiencing their 'leisure and domestic lives' in 'full view' of each other, which completely subverted the architecture of society.[251] The overlap between the private and public space created a tension and an otherness which was only exaggerated by the dramatic setting of the underground. The cultivation of the Ramsgate Tunnels into its 'Tunnel Town', beyond its initial purpose as an emergency ARP shelter, was a conscious and deliberate effort by its occupants, driven by three clear desires: hygiene, privacy, and a sense of home. These three desires had previously been exclusive to those in possession of private shelters. However, the evolution of the Ramsgate Tunnels disrupted the separation between public and private shelters. Staking claims on space, construction of enclosures,

[247] Sefton Delmer, *Black Boomerang* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962), p.22.
[248] Calder, *The People's War*, p.184.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Frances Faviel, *A Chelsea Concerto* (London: Dean Street Press, 2016), p.140.
[251] Mass Observation, *The Tube Dwellers* (October 1943), p.1.

and the migration of material effects from the surface were all efforts which garnered a sense of ownership and therefore security for the shelterer within an open public space.

Vera Ferris, who was a teenager when she sheltered in the Ramsgate Tunnels, claimed during her interview for BBC Radio Kent about her childhood underground, that it was her father and the Town Council foreman, Tom Revel, who created the prototype for the enclosures which would populate the Tunnels. The idea had come from Mr.Ferris' determination for privacy, as he hated sleeping out in full view of everyone else, thus he and Revel created a matchbox-like home. Constructed from an erected timber strutting enclosing a space around twelve feet in length and eight feet wide, this structure was then covered with curtains or sheets making the walls which shut out the rest of the Tunnel.[252] These small dwellings quickly caught on and other occupants followed suit with whatever 'old rags' or curtains they could find.[253] Contemporarily termed as 'enclosures', these matchbox-like houses without roofs populated the disused Railway, while those sleeping in the purpose built wartime Tunnels without the same degree of comfort or privacy had to 'make do'.[254] As with many deep shelters there was a sheltering hierarchy; in the case of Ramsgate it concerned degrees of comfort. This is shown by the better homemaking opportunities of those that had staked places earlier in the main Railway Tunnel. These earlier shelterers had the choice of natural alcoves and spaces to erect their enclosures, unlike those in the purpose-built wartime Tunnel. The organised and curated nature of the Tunnel by the Ramsgate community as shown in the erection of miniature houses and clear boundaries of claimed space disputed the general belief that deep shelters were sites of 'rowdyism and squabbling'.[255]

The Ramsgate Tunnels are an example of a deep shelter which was, as David L. Pike describes, 'repossessed by the everyday', subterranean spaces which were transformed into genuine underground worlds for their occupants.[256] This desire to adapt the subterranean space in time of crisis originated from efforts during the First World War when soldiers occupying the trenches attempted to alter the

[252] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99 Life in the Tunnels: The Diary: Papers of William Herbert Gibson of Ramsgate (1939-1945), p.120.
[253] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Mass Observation, *The Tube Dwellers* (October 1943), pp.1-5.
[256] David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.179.

foreign space into something familiar. Pike argues that in the case of the Second World War, the nation had had experience of underground sheltering and therefore there was not the same 'traumatic need' as the subterranean was not a 'wholly alien space'; instead it was 'almost eagerly' malleable to the domestication efforts of its inhabitants.[257] The Ramsgate Tunnels possessed a duality between its original purpose as a shelter against aerial bombardment and its occupation as a hive of the social life of Ramsgate. This duality reflected on a micro-level the status of the Home Front: juxtaposing the constant possibility of sudden death and destruction against the mundane rituals of everyday life.[258]

Figure Five captures the early home-making efforts of the rudimentary 'Tunnel Town'; collections of beds, chairs, tables and cradles. However, one can see in the photograph that there were efforts to bring down possessions which were not essentials for sleeping. Despite the rudimentary nature of the Tunnel, there were considerable efforts to enhance the space; a painting is hung on the brick wall above a bookcase filled with belongings. Alongside these efforts to decorate, despite the rough, rocky floor, the beds are made, tables are lined with tablecloths, and blankets and clothes are carefully folded and hung over the end of beds. Vera, while recounting life in the Tunnels, listed all the possessions her family had when they first set up shop in the main Tunnel. The details Vera remembered, such as the type of stove they had or her father's refusal to sleep in a bunkbed leading to the bringing down of his own double bed, illuminated the importance these material effects had on shelterers and how they experienced the Tunnels.[259] The furniture that the Ferris family brought down had multiple purposes, not least to fight the 'very' cold and 'dampish' conditions of the Tunnels. The bed cabinet for example stored the bedding and clothes to protect from the damp. But also, as material traces of the life before the war, these personal effects helped the occupant to adapt to the subterranean environment. Vera's faith in the promised safety of the subterranean reconciled her to the constant damp conditions and even her consequential arthritis.

[257] Ibid. p.173.
[258] Ibid.
[259] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.

Figure 6: Shelterers making themselves at home'. Taken from An Illustrated Account of Life in Ramsgate During the Early Years of World War II, compiled by William Herbert Gibson, the Assistant Rating Officer with Ramsgate Corporation, Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99/F1 1939-1941

Whilst Figure Five documented the early process of domesticating the tunnels, Figure Six offers the culmination of these efforts. Named 'Shelterers making themselves at home', Gibson captured a dining scene in 'Tunnel Town'. The shelterers have been, both then and now, defined by their occupation of these enclosures which made up the subterranean town. Instead of simply occupying the underground space, the residents of Ramsgate tunnelled underground. Transforming the Tunnels into a rabbit warren-like structure, decorated and insulated, the shelterers sought refuge in the earth for hibernation. In this sense, sheltering was not only a means of protection for the Ramsgate population but it created a new subterranean life for the town. Air raid shelters were not, as Gabriel Moshenska argues, 'empty monuments', but rather 'extensions of the home'; they were lived-in, inhabited, social spaces.[260] The Ramsgate Tunnels housed these efforts by shelterers to replicate the 'familiarity and

[260] Gabriel Moshenska, *Material cultures of childhood in Second World War Britain* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp.75-6.

comfort' of the home through decoration and material artefacts of their previous homes.[261] The Tunnels contained both the characteristics of how space was navigated by private and public shelterers, from the domesticated gendered spaces of the enclosures to the assertion of individual space through bodily presence.[262]

Figure Six's dollhouse-like composition evokes the style of late 19th century domestic interior photography. This was a genre with the purpose of documenting the process of personalisation within the home through the arrangement of belongings within the space in a unified composition.[263] Central to the domestic interior photograph was the capturing and conveying the personal character, taste, and narrative through the material culture.[264] The dining scene is rich in visual information, from how the furniture is organised to how the women are eating their meal. The material culture used in the preparation of the cooked meal and how it was plated, show these efforts from the shelterers to continue surface life underground. From the plates and cutlery to cloth-covered tables, this visual evidence communicates in a larger sense how the material culture was used, recreating everyday rituals to instil a sense of normality within the alien setting. Due to the lack of contextual information, we do not know if Gibson captured a special moment or an everyday occurrence, or even when the wartime photo was taken. Beyond the action of the scene there is much to be gained by looking at the material culture which surround the women. There was a degree of psychological investment in furnishing a home, as decorating is a medium to communicate and manifest a sense of individuality. Sociologist Elizabeth Shove, when writing about the domestic space, argues that often it is the case that people's identities are 'wrapped up in their chairs and tables' as much as in the space itself.[265] In the Tunnels the items which were brought down and salvaged from the wreckage of their homes held additional sentimental value; they were what physically remained of their lives before the war. How the shelterers related both to each other and to the space was translated through these objects. For example, at the centre of the

[261] Ibid. p.109.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Sarah Anne Carter, 'Picturing Rooms: Interior Photography 1870–1900', *History of Photography*, Vol.34: No.3, (2010) 251-267 (p.252).
[264] Ibid.
[265] Elizabeth Shove, 'Constructing Home: A Crossroads of Choices', in Irene Gieraad (eds) *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p.132.

photograph is a kettle and Beatrice camping stove showing that warmth was a priority in the Tunnels. In these microcosms of daily scenes, the décor of curtain fabric wall hangings and lamp shades carry great social significance, providing the language to communicate a sense of self to others and therefore bridging the divide between public and private lives.[266] Due to the anonymity of the women in the photo, the image has become a larger symbol of life in the Tunnels.

Gibson's ability to capture these snapshots of the interior worlds of the Tunnels was aided by his simultaneous connection with and separation from the space. The act of taking the photograph involves the physical act of putting the camera in between the subject and the photographer therefore creating a distance. Writer-photographer Stefan Vanthuyne builds upon fellow photographer Alec Soth's theory, that photographs capture the 'space between us', to argue that this 'intimate distance' defines domestic photography.[267] Gibson's careful and detailed documentation of the Tunnels through both written and visual accounts highlights the contemporary awareness of the uniqueness and importance of the Tunnels. The scenes Gibson captured have become themselves representations of normality. While this could have been Gibson's intention, there is an issue with the accuracy of this representation of a singular moment in a transient environment. There is no way of telling how domestic life changed throughout the day.

Figure Six's scene is filled with examples of the decoration efforts by the shelterers from the fabric drapery to the tablecloths. The domestic scene is populated by possessions they had brought down with them, such as chairs and a lamp with a lampshade. The subterranean space was altered and made homely through such furnishing as a 'carpet on the ground'.[268] While these efforts were motivated for comfort they were also to create an atmosphere of familiarity and security. Whilst these efforts by the sheltering population to 'make home' existed throughout the Ramsgate Tunnels there were divergent experiences based on location within the space. This distinction of experience has been attributed to those that inhabited 'Tunnel Town' versus those that temporarily occupied the ARP Tunnels during air

[266] Ibid.
[267] Stefan Vanthuyne, *An Intimate Distance*, [Online] The Ones We Love Magazine: Issue One (Spring, 2015) <http://www.stefanvanthuyne.be/an-intimate-distance/> [Accessed on: 6 June 2021]
[268] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99 Life in the Tunnels: The Diary: Papers of William Herbert Gibson of Ramsgate (1939-1945), p.121.

raids. The ARP Tunnels carved out of the chalk were an ambiguous structure, created for people to occupy the emptiness where the rock was previously present. Therefore, unlike the architecture of the main Tunnel those that inhabited this 'emptiness' constructed temporary spaces utilising the natural alcoves and emergency bunkbeds. Thus, in the same space and site there were contradictory experiences, most of the oral testimonies preserved about the Ramsgate Tunnels were from temporary shelterers who observed those who took up permanent residence. However, consistent in both experiences was a desire for impact upon the environment, documenting the time they spent in the site.

These efforts to recreate home in the Tunnels mirror the 'domestic counter sites' or 'Wendy houses' the British women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) fashioned in Calais during the First World War.[269] The women were described as having 'brought home with them', recreating domestic environments through the employment of makeshift tapestries for privacy and decoration.[270] The 'Wendy houses' they fashioned were a means of emotional sustenance through providing momentary respite from the psychological torment of warfare.[271] The femininity of these domestic spheres the women created juxtaposed the brutalities of warfare thus causing that which Foucault terms a 'crisis heterotopia'.[272] The arrival of aerial bombardment during the Second World War, meant that there were no longer clear divisions between the domestic world that civilians inhabited and the front line; instead, warfare had become part of the everyday, and the domestic therefore disrupted the traditional 'masculine' hegemony of combat. During the Second World War there was the similar need for domestic reconstructions as shown in Figure One and Two. The Ramsgate Tunnels population used the hanging of pictures, fabrics, and tapestries to create a sense of the reassuringly 'familiar' which conflicted with its wartime context. These acts of personalisation shared the same psychological benefit as the First World War 'Wendy houses'.

[269] Janet Lee, 'FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) "Other Spaces": Toward an Application of Foucault's Heterotopias as Alternate Spaces of Social Ordering', *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol 16: No.6 (2018), 647-664 (p.652).
[270] Ibid. p.657.
[271] Ibid. p.658.
[272] Ibid.

Defying the perception of the sewer: domestication as an expression of individuality

The Second World War redefined the relationship between selfhood and citizenship for the field of psychoanalysis. This in tandem with the lessons from the First World War shifted the focus from the corporeal to the psychological. Total warfare crossed the traditional boundaries between the front line and the Home Front which for Michal Shapira mirrored the merging for civilians between the 'real war outside' and an emotional 'war inside'.[273] This perception of total warfare as a 'war of anxiety' was largely due to the civilian population's experience during the Spanish Civil War.[274] In the lead up to the Second World War, the Spanish Civil War was a significant point of reference for how the British Government anticipated and understood modern combat. The potential psychological consequences of repeated bombing campaigns redefined wartime preparations and civilian relationship with warfare. Ramsgate's preparations centred around the adoption of the subterranean, utilising the protection of going underground and creating distance from the surface. The blurring of the front line and the Home Front meant that the war effort hinged on civilian resilience and endurance. This prolonged existence underground meant that the Ramsgate population was not only confronted by destruction on the surface but the cultural legacy of the subterranean. Classically the underground was the realm of the underworld, occupied by sewers, decomposition, disease, death and decay.[275] The mythical imagery attached to the subterranean space was bolstered throughout 19th century moral satire and social critique; which found the underground an 'urban spectacle'.[276] Therefore, the Ramsgate Tunnels' shelterers were reconciling the irony that the surface now possessed the dangerous characteristics traditionally attributed to the subterranean environment: 'irrational', 'primitive' and 'uncontrollable'.[277]

The making of home in 'Tunnel Town' was an essential coping mechanism; the altering of the space with material possessions, textiles, and social rituals suggests that the sheltering population benefited from some psychological comfort. Private shelters had the advantage of a sense of privacy which came from the feeling of 'ownership'. This had the effect of making people feel more comfortable

[273] Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and Making of the Democratic Self in Post-war Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.1-25.
[274] Ibid. p.33.
[275] Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*, p.6.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.

and secure not because they are 'actually safer' but because they feel the shelters 'belong to them'.[278] The dual nature of the Ramsgate Tunnels as a public shelter with a private shelter character is shown by the domestication efforts shelterers utilised to create their own spaces. The shelterers were able to claim a sense of individual ownership of the space, beyond the collective sense derived from the Tunnels being purpose-built for the Ramsgate population. This is illustrated by the naming of the enclosures; Vera Ferris' father named theirs '10 Downing Street' to symbolise his original idea, others followed suit and were inspired by their surface homes, such as 'Cosy Nook'.[279] Domestication was just one of many coping mechanisms shelterers used in the Tunnels to process what was happening to and around them. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, domestication fostered the sense of family and community. Shelterers wanted to recreate the home not just for themselves but for their children and spouses, which in turn confirmed their identities as 'mothers' and 'fathers' caring and providing for their families.

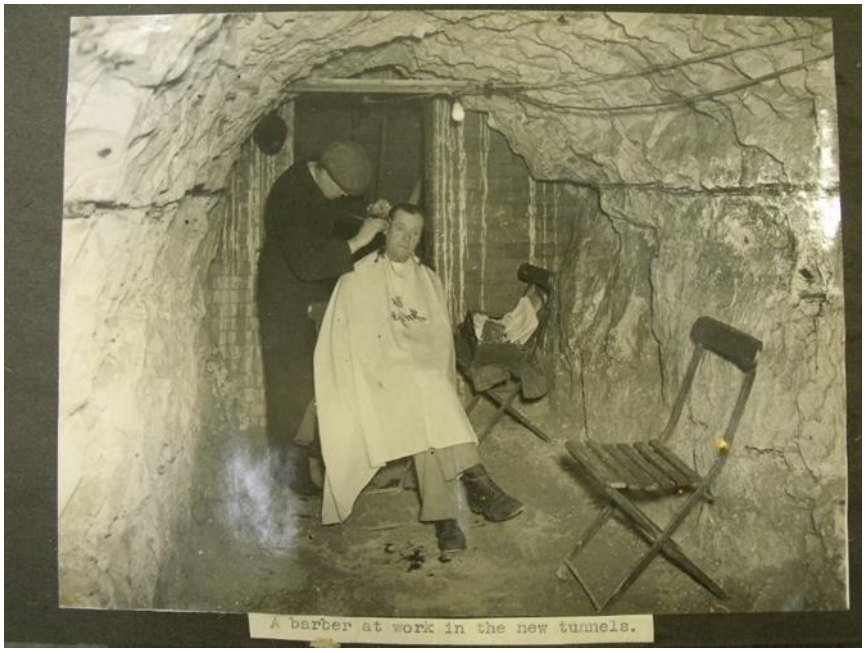

Figure 7: 'A barber at work in the new Tunnels.', Taken from An Illustrated Account of Life in Ramsgate During the Early Years of World War II, Compiled by William Herbert Gibson, the Assistant Rating Officer with Ramsgate Corporation, Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99/F1 (1939-1941).

[278] Celia Fremlin, *A14 Air Raid Shelters File Report*, Mass Observation, March 1939, p.5.
[279] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.

For shelterers continuing with mundane rituals such as getting one's hair cut was fundamental to their sense of self, home, and normality. On first impression, the need for an underground barber shop appears superficial; this view is symptomatic of the superimposed notion of the shadow of war - the idea that every moment of life on the Home Front was concerned with the war effort. The maintenance of appearance was not only an opportunity for individual expression but also vital in asserting what little autonomy they had over their wartime existence. Figure Seven captures the intimacy of the scene between barber and client, cutting hair in an alcove of the chalk ARP Tunnels with a single bulb above for light. The poor lighting conditions indicated in Figure Seven suggests that the quality was not as important as that which the barber symbolised: the continuity of pre-war life underground. The barber carrying on underground suggests the need for life to 'carry on'; not just as a means of distraction or keeping busy but to maintain his livelihood. Symbolically, visiting the subterranean barber was a contemporary effort for composure in the face of: the conditions in the Tunnels, the trauma of the wreckage of their previous life, and the constant threat of death. On a practical level, Figure Three emphasises the value placed upon maintaining the everyday pursuit of cleanliness and appearance by the shelterers. This priority towards cleanliness in the Tunnels juxtaposed with the subterranean environment which was traditionally characterised as a sewer-like disordered and unclean landscape.

Cleaning and bathing were frequent social rituals, as it is believed that the shelterers would routinely queue to bathe at whichever remaining house still had cleaning facilities. The bodily act of cleaning was a soothing process which ultimately fostered psychological comfort. This link was recognised contemporarily in a London post-raid public welfare report, which documented that the bombed-out civilians usually appeared 'filthy' and suffering from 'shock'. The report concluded that after a 'good wash' there was 'admirable effect' from the feeling of being 'clean again' upon the spirits of the bombed-out.[280] The report recognised the psychological benefits from cleaning and the

[280] HO 207/386, REGION No 5 (LONDON): Public shelters, tube stations and Deep Shelters: reports on welfare and general conditions, 1940-1945, Ministry of Home Security, O/LR 15 (Pts I & II), *War, State and Society*, [Online]
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.ho207/000386/001?t0=0&q0=entertainment&o0=and&pf=1938&pt=1957&pfm=1&ptm=12&pfrr=True&cnf=1938&cnt=1957&cnfm=1&cntm=12&cnrr=True&cvf=1938

maintenance of self. This resulted in the report's recommendation for ARP wardens to have three sets of towels and soap as reserves for those bombed-out as cleaning was an immediate means of comfort and regaining a sense of self.

Leisure was another coping mechanism used in the Tunnels. It offered distraction from not only their immediate conditions in the Tunnels but the larger, more incomprehensible realities of total warfare: invasion and death. These moments of leisure – be it listening to music, engaging in hobbies or socialising – were essential for the mental wellbeing of the shelterers. There was a conference held in 1940 by the London Civil Defence Region concerned with the question of the provision of education and entertainment in shelters attended by representatives of the Board of Education, British Institute of Adult Education and the Library Association. Whilst the conference acknowledged the need for the provision of entertainment and education, there were still lingering concerns. These concerns culminated in the fear that such provisions could make shelters too attractive and therefore undermine the dispersal aim of shelter policy. The compromise was the recommendation of basic provisions: subterranean makeshift library collections and tools for education such as pens, paper and desks. Ultimately the purpose of the conference was to find quick means of boosting morale and reassuring shelterers that the Government was concerned for their welfare.[281] The unique case of the Ramsgate Tunnels meant that the shelterers had more autonomy over the space than in other repurposed deep shelters. Entertainment was an effective coping mechanism used by the sheltering population to reconcile the hours spent underground. Classic social markers of pre-war life, Christmas celebrations and birthday parties, were recreated in the subterranean not only for entertainment but a sense of normality. The Christmas party held in the western section of the Tunnels during 1942 was 'camouflaged' with makeshift Christmas ornaments not dissimilar to the 'Tunnel party' captured in Figure Eight.[282] Celebrations like Donald Beech's seventh birthday party transformed the Tunnels into an 'an atmosphere of warmth' thereby transporting its occupants beyond their immediate reality.[283]

&cvt=1957&cvfm=1&cvtm=12&cvrr=True&sid=515770408&st=False&sy=False&rc=true> [Accessed on: 09 June 2021] p.5.

[281] Ibid.

[282] 'Tunnel Party: A Visit from Santa Claus', *Advertiser and Echo*, 1 January 1943, p.4.

[283] 'Tunnel Party: For Donald's Birthday', *Advertiser and Echo*, 10 December 1940, p.3.

Figure 8: Photographer unknown, The Isle of Thanet News [Online] <https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2017/09/10/a-look-at-the-ramsgate-tunnels-which-feature-in-a-new-war-time-novel/> [Accessed on: 8 June 2021].

David Ashford concluded that amongst the images Bill Brandt captured of the 'tube-dwellers' it was his 'Christmas in Hell' collection which was the most significant.[284] These images conveyed the same message of civilian stoicism which characterised the propaganda docu-dramas such as '*Britain Can Take It!*' (1940) and *Christmas Under Fire* (1941). Historian Dietmar Süss notes that across European nations sheltering against aerial bombardment, such shelter mentalities were in themselves a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. They may begin life as propaganda efforts to boost civilian morale, but in turn manifested a form of solidarity against psychic collapse.[285] However, this communal spirit was forged in the social interactions the shelterers had in these spaces, such as playing cards, knitting, reading, sharing tea or listening to the wireless.[286]

Vera Ferris, when interviewed about her teenage years in the Tunnels, describes a world not burdened with the same responsibilities of the adults which occupied the space. Instead, Vera found a

[284] David Ashford, *Irish London: Middle-Class Migration in the Global Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p.137.
[285] Dietmar Süss, 'Wartime Societies and Shelter Politics in National Socialist Germany and Britain', in Claudia Baldoli (ed.) *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2011), pp.13-14.
[286] Ibid. p.11.

'a world unto its own' which always had something to do for the 'youngsters'. Populated by all her friends she was able to get up to all 'the same things down the Tunnel as what we would have done if we were up the top'.[287] In her account Vera emphasises also her memories of the adults 'enjoying' improvised Tunnel nightlife.[288]

Figure 9:'Two women dancing at a party in the underground tunnels, as they shelter from the German air raids in Ramsgate, Kent, March 1941, Medium: Black and White photograph, Mirrorpix/Bridgeman Images, IMAGE number: MPX422037

Figure Nine captures the dances and concerts which proved to Vera that 'even in times of despair there were some highlights'.[289] The gleaming faces of the dancing party symbolised moments which transformed the Tunnels into a site which had, despite their 'sickly appearance', a more 'cheerful' and 'companionable' population than any average surface community.[290] It was the scattering of these joyous scenes which led to Vera's remarkable confession that she 'never wanted to come out of the Tunnel'.[291] The effect these social rituals had upon the morale of the shelterers meant that they became

[287] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Rose, *A Ramsgate Boy's Memoires of the Second World War*, p.13.
[290] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99 Life in the Tunnels: The Diary: Papers of William Herbert Gibson of Ramsgate (1939-1945), p.121.
[291] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.

essential to life in 'Tunnel Town'. David Ashford argues that moments which depict the 'ultimate triumph' of the dweller over their situation are so precious and important due to how hard won they were.[292] Happy moments such as birthdays and Christmases underground disrupt the one-dimensional shelter myth which focuses only on depictions of fear and misery against the darkness.

Conclusion

This chapter has been focused on how the Ramsgate Tunnels' shelterers made home underground. Using the Tunnel space in combination with contemporary photography a visual narrative was created; showing how the shelterers used material culture in their domestication of the subterranean dwelling. Whilst this approach provides insight into how enclosures were created and used, it also implies how material culture and acts of domestication or leisure were coping mechanisms. The Tunnels have been largely undisturbed since their abandonment thus much of the physical spatial impact of the contemporary social interaction remains sketched upon the site. Life within the Ramsgate Tunnels during the Second World War was a period of an active relationship with the space, one which helped to maintain a sense of order and normality. Therefore, through the re-creation of pre-war necessities such as a barber shop, shelterers were able to assert their individuality and cleanliness as a means of coping with the unstable and unpredictable nature of subterranean sheltering. Due to the lack of primary sources from the period, contemporary photography has been the main way Ramsgate's 'Tunnel Town' has been accessed. In this case the Ramsgate Tunnels space is imbued with the physical narrative of how the shelterers made home in the subterranean.

[292] Ashford, *Irish London*, p.117.

Chapter Three

'The Tunnel cements us like objects in glue'[293]: the effect and meaning of subterranean darkness

Figure 10: Vince Runance, 'Ramsgate Air Raid Tunnels: Railway Tunnel Section', Thanet Underground, Monday 29th 2006, <http://thanetunderground.blogspot.com/2006/05/ramsgate-air-raid-tunnels-railway.html> [Accessed on: 19 July 2021]

In 1992, 15-year-old Vince Runacre and his friends explored their hometown's 'Tunnel Town'. Vince would later go on to publish his urban underground explorations from this period online. The Ramsgate Tunnels had been sealed off and 'allowed to fall into disrepair' by the time Vince and his friends were exploring Thanet's subterranean spaces. Vince documented his subterranean exploration with visual and written accounts in combination with his on-site sketches and measurements. The group had expected to encounter the characteristic subterranean darkness of the Ramsgate Tunnels, but they also found the material remnants of its occupation.

[293] Walter Knapton Lewis, *The Call of the Tunnel*, Ramsgate Library, Ramsgate Heritage Archive, KE.3.1 (940.53).

Figure 11: Vince Runance, 'Ramsgate Air Raid Tunnels: Railway Tunnel Section', Thanet Underground, Monday 29th 2006, <http://thanetunderground.blogspot.com/2006/05/ramsgate-air-raid-tunnels-railway.html> [Accessed on: 3 September 2021]

The Tunnels as Vince found them, documented in Figure Two, were occupied with belongings from bedframes to the Scenic Railway ride carts left to decay. The main consensus as to why these possessions were abandoned was that this had been logistically motivated, as recovery of these material affects would mirror the original difficulty getting them down there in the first place. Additionally, after the four to five-year occupation the objects, many of which had originally been salvaged from bomb wreckage, would have naturally deteriorated from use and the subterranean conditions. Subsequently the material essence of the 'Tunnel Town' was left behind, inadvertently preserving the sheltering landscape. Figure Ten is particularly evocative: one of the deserted bedframes, now rusted exists as a recognisable fossil of the subterranean town life. The bedframes were distinctively powerful in evoking the domestication efforts made by the shelterers during the Second World War. Vince in his blog post uses a contemporary sheltering image (Figure Twelve) as a foil to decipher and read his own photograph (Figure Ten). Chapter Two discusses further the use of objects in home-making efforts in the Tunnels and how these objects came to symbolise individuality, normality, and community.

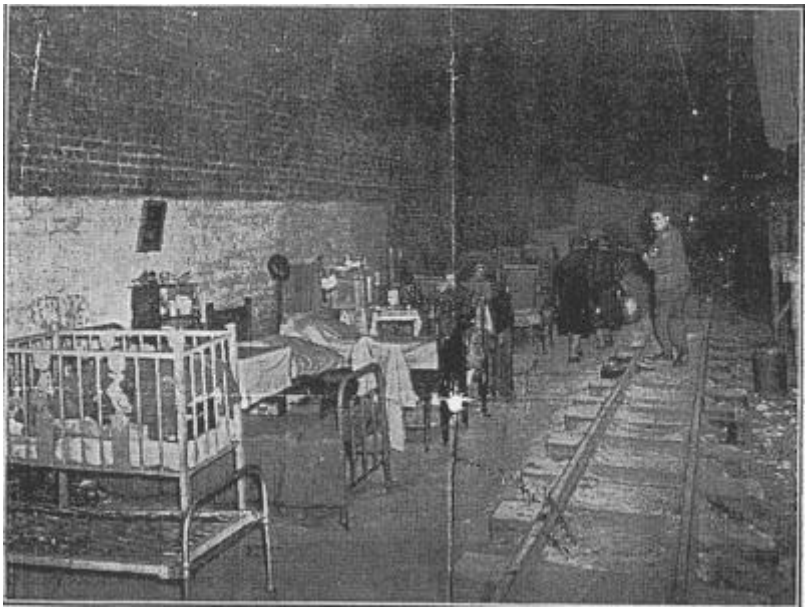

Figure 12: Vince Runance, 'Ramsgate Air Raid Tunnels: Railway Tunnel Section', Thanet Underground, Monday 29th 2006, <http://thanetunderground.blogspot.com/2006/05/ramsgate-air-raid-tunnels-railway.html> [Accessed on: 19 July 2021]

The emotional impact for Vince of encountering the 'famous Tunnels' was only intensified upon encountering the surreal untouched remains of the subterranean community. The absence of any documented deliberate efforts to conserve 'Tunnel Town' was by virtue of its abandonment as the Tunnels naturally preserved its sheltering landscape. During the Second World War the French village of Oradour sur Glane was massacred by an SS Das Reich battalion; contemporarily in 1946 the French government mandated the conservation of the ruins as a national memorial site. While both sites were preserved in the moment they were left, the Ramsgate Tunnels did not have the same symbolic intentionality as there wasn't a deliberate decision to leave everything down there, instead it was partly motivated by convenience.

Historical sites or locations throughout the study of history have played a central role not only as a lasting tangible remain but as a talisman to the event. While the remaining space offered access to where the event happened, such proximity was also used as an authenticator for certain interpretations of what occurred. The Second World War, like the First World War, has been remembered through its physical remains and location, just as the Field of Flanders has had trenches restaged, the Blitz has been remembered through re-enactment displays. This historical tourist demand to experience the space as a means of materially engaging with the past originated from the central role locational context plays

within memory and experience.[294] The site in which events occurred are in their nature vital to understanding and contextualising what happened. In a similar way to which the terrain of a battlefield illustrated the events of a skirmish, the ARP shelters were the spaces within which shelterers experienced aerial bombardment. The space itself in this sense is a witness, one which has been mythologised as a gateway to a first-person encounter with history. As Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson have noted when working with memories of the Second World War, memory does not 'exist in a vacuum'; rather, it is constantly affected and shaped by location, politics, culture, and history.[295] This chapter is focussed on the effect of location, of the sites and why they have remained a tangible link to the past and a means of discovery. The Home Front landscape was defined by the places in which people lived and sheltered. Ramsgate's population experienced the Second World War through the town's Tunnels; the ways in which they lived, slept, and interacted with the space was inscribed upon its walls. Therefore, the meaning created within this space was woven into how the community understood and processed their memories.[296] In micro-histories such as that of the Ramsgate Tunnels, when little has been preserved of the primary experience of such specific sheltering during the Second World War, the site itself can work as a witness.

Samuel Merrill's work 'excavating' the 'buried memories' of underground experience during the Second World War first turned to 'buried spaces' themselves.[297] Here there is the potential to use a spatial history approach to engage with memories and events in a new way. The rise of the 'spatial turn', as historian Charles W.J. Withers explains, allowed for this new way to approach historical events through the sites themselves, employing the disciplines of geography and anthropology in tandem with historical methodology.[298] The spatial lens uses an archaeological approach, recognising earth and space as depositories of memory. Key advocates for spatial history, Albert Giordano, Anne Kelly Knowles

[294] Tim Edensor, 'Staging Tourism: tourists as performers', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 27: No.2 (2000), pp. 322- 344.
[295] Lucy Noakes, Juliette Pattinson (eds.) *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.4.
[296] Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (University of New Mexico Press, 1996), p.110.
[297] Samuel Merrill, *Networked Remembrance: Excavating Buried Memories in the Railways beneath London and Berlin* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2017).
[298] Charles W. J. Withers, 'Place and the "Spatial Turn", Geography and in History', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 70: No.4 (2009), pp. 637-658.

and Tim Cole, have all asserted the importance of location as the first means to understand any historical event.[299] In the social phenomenon of deep level sheltering the location defines the entirety of the shelterers' experience. The process of remembering, as Geoff Eley defines, involves the past interacting and relating to the present.[300] While this approach underpins the strategy of analysing space, the physical realm is not a neutral background against which events occur; instead it influences and defines the experience as much as the event transforms the space.

This work approaches the subterranean space as a witness which is based on the theories of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre articulated in his 1974 work *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre theorises that what happened in a particular spot is inscribed in the space, as 'the past leaves its traces'.[301] This chapter employs Lefebvre's theory on the relationship between corporeality and space to investigate acts of dwelling and inhabitation. Through studying space, Lefebvre argues, one finds social relations of production have a social existence and therefore a 'spatial existence'.[302] Therefore experiences 'project' themselves and become 'inscribed' upon the physical space, redefining the site, leaving traces of history having occurred.[303] Through the bodily interaction with the site, the landscape of the Tunnels became a social space therefore defined by Lefebvre's three elements: 'the perceived, the conceived and the lived'.[304] Spaces are imbued with meaning and cultural significance as shown in popular culture's relationship with the subterranean. Traditionally shrouded in religious imagery the underground was conflated with the underworld of the dead. The employment of the subterranean as a funerary landscape is an example of the symbiotic relationship between how underground spaces 'generate meaning' and the ways those meanings 'produce underground spaces.' [305]

[299] Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole and Alberto Giordano (eds.) *Geographies of the Holocaust,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), p.2.
[300] Geoff Eley, 'Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 106: No. 3 (June 2001), 818-838, (p.818).
[301] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Hoboken: Wiley, 1991), p.37.
[302] Ibid. p.129.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City,* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2012), pp.121- 125.
[305] David L. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx: The underworlds of modern urban culture, 1800-2001* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007), p.10.

The Ramsgate Tunnels, due to its uniqueness as an ARP shelter, widens the understanding of sheltering spaces - how these spaces were, in Ramsgate's case, created, navigated, and transformed throughout their inhabitation. Unlike other deep shelters that occupied transient 'non-places' such as the London Underground, the Ramsgate Tunnels' purpose was for sheltering. Anthropologist Marc Augé defined 'non-places' as 'fleeting', 'temporary', and 'inhuman' spaces in constant states of transition.[306] Home offers a place in which identity and community is asserted and expressed. Therefore, a major repercussion from the forced displacements caused by the Blitz was the sense of insecurity. The Ramsgate Tunnels created a sense of stability for its inhabitants: by its nature of being purpose-built, it offered a constant connection to place without the threat of displacement or being moved on. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Tunnels offered a malleable environment beyond the local authorities' designs which allowed inhabitants themselves to create a sense of home and therefore self in the space through the aesthetic interior design. Whereas in public shelters, such as the London Underground, sheltering occurred outside the hours of its primary purpose of transportation; by morning commuting hours, all evidence of its occupation was cleared away. The sense of permanency achieved in the Ramsgate Tunnels was therefore in complete contrast to the transient nature of sheltering in popular memory. This is due largely to the dominance of the London Underground experience over the cultural perception of deep sheltering. The Ramsgate Tunnels have remained entrenched and imbued with traces of the social interaction and experiences of its shelterers during its period as the home to the Ramsgate community.

The focus of this chapter is to use the spatial lens to help access the sheltering occupancy of the Tunnels which was at a moment of transition between Ramsgate before and after the Second World War. During the extended sheltering period between 1939 and 1945 the Ramsgate populace lived in a state of permanent liminality. Permanent liminality describes an extended period of liminality in which the population existed that was undefined and separate to their lives before and after the war. It is therefore extremely hard to access such ephemerality as the experience of living within the subterranean

[306] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), pp.78-9.

in the context of the Second World War only existed during that limited period. The experience of tomorrow's 'now' is different to yesterday's is Doreen Massey's philosophy that place is relative and not static. Landscapes are constantly suspended in a state of 'in between-ness'; however the spatial narratives are an accumulation of encounters intertwined into a spatial history.[307] Therefore, there is value in encountering the space now as it is 'inescapably entangled' with the before.[308]

Anthropologist Emily Orley disentangled the concept of places remembering, arguing that while the space retains traces embodied within its physical make-up, the act of memory or remembering is the animation from human encounter.[309] The space 'remembers' through the individual encounter 'actively sensing' the past and 'paying attention' to its physical remains.[310] Anthropologist Keith H. Basso cautioned the use of space 'memory', emphasising the danger of scholars merely listening to 'disembodied voices speaking silently to themselves' and interpreting what they want to about the past.[311] The elemental focus of this chapter on the effect, meaning and experience of darkness within the Ramsgate Tunnels takes on an anthropological lens of space. By focusing upon the elemental effect upon the spatial arrangement, the shelterers' experience and sense of identity can be sourced from the site retaining its meaning.[312] Through returning focus to the site and its remaining physical traces, primary visual depictions can be contextualised; where objects were placed, the sensory experience such as smells, texture, and pitch of darkness. There is, as Marc Augé argues, a separation in the experience of an inhabitant of an anthropological place, as 'he does not make history; he lives in it'; therefore their site, in the light of its historical importance, is transformed from the space they lived in day to day.[313] Transforming a site into a fragment of history also turns the inhabitants into 'spectators of themselves, tourists of the private'.[314] In the case of the Ramsgate Tunnels the local newspapers wrote about the uniqueness of the Tunnels and their experience of darkness. The space was never static

[307] Emily Orley, 'Places Remember Events: Towards an Ethics Encounter', in Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (eds.) *Liminal Landscapes Travel, Experience and Spaces In-Between,* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.39.
[308] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), p.139.
[309] Ibid. p.37.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places,* p.109.
[312] Augé, *Non-Places,* p.45.
[313] Ibid. pp.54-5.
[314] Ibid.

but ever evolving throughout the years of its occupation. Even the seemingly consistent character of darkness changed during the Tunnels occupation. In his written accounts, Gibson captures a brief but exceptional moment: when the subterranean darkness was replaced with an illuminated funfair. This account changes popular perceptions on how residents experienced and interacted with the underground and the culture of darkness on the Home Front.

The Ramsgate Tunnels were a man-made subterranean space that, like other underground structures such as cemeteries and mines, were seen as 'alien space(s)' and 'inorganic', separate from the surface. [315] Deep level sheltering populations brought with them the everyday to the underground. In the case of Ramsgate, as focused upon in Chapter One, the juxtaposition between its peacetime identity as a health destination and its wartime inhabitancy of the subterranean was significant. This dichotomy on a symbolic and elemental level concerned the seaside town's relationship with light and darkness. This dynamic was especially defined during the occupancy of the Ramsgate Tunnels due to the constant exposure to the subterranean spatial connection with darkness. There was a certain irony in Ramsgate's surface topography known as a sanctuary for health and pleasure transforming into a landscape of such fear and destruction that the population tunnelled underground.

The transformation of the subterranean from 'A kingdom of death' to a realm safety and security

'A kingdom of death, realm of dust and decomposition and site of the afterlife' was, as David L. Pike argues, the cultural perception of the subterranean.[316] Both Pike and Rosalind Williams have written extensively about the dual identity of the subterranean: as both a classically primitive space and the locus of modernity.[317] Defined by its absence of light, the Ramsgate Tunnels were shrouded in imagery of entombment and claustrophobia. The subterranean darkness for hundreds of years hid the 'trade' and goods of smugglers across the Kent coast.[318] This lineage manifested a haunted mythology of

[315] David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.178.
[316] Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*, p.1.
[317] Ibid. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005); Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground: An Essay on Technology, Society, and the Imagination* (London, MIT Publication, 2008).
[318] 'Smugglers Help Ramsgate's A.R.P', *British Periodicals*, Vol.105: No.271, 18 May 1940, p.7.

Ramsgate's subterranean spaces, to the extent that during its occupation in the Second World War a paranormal account of the darkness was published.[319] A five-pound reward was offered for anyone who could stay 'alone in the darkness' for the whole night; a teenage girl accepted the challenge. During the night she fainted from shock but was 'never able to explain what had frightened her so much'.[320] As discussed in Chapter One, which explored the social and cultural history behind the themes of lightness and darkness, the absence of light is frequently associated with disease. Victor Hugo in his work *Les Misérables* dedicated 13 pages to Jean Valjean's descent or 'fall' from 'one circle of Hell' to another: the diseased labyrinth of the Paris sewer system.[321] Hugo's vivid assertion of the subterranean absence of light engaged with a larger legacy of dark spaces being the realm of the morally decrepit and criminal. This is shown in Valjean's journey through the sewers carrying the critically injured Marius, he encounters the crook Thénardier who mistakes him for a common body snatcher and steals Marius' signet ring. The subterranean is therefore defined for Hugo as the illicit and transgressive realm of body snatchers and criminals evading the law. Hereby reiterating into cultural memory, the underground as 'shadowy' in both environment and morality.[322]

The subterranean has possessed an alluring identity of 'otherworldliness' which has also been viewed with trepidation at its unknown character.[323] The darkness of the subterranean played a significant role in casting the underground as mysterious or the setting for 'symbolism, cosmology, myth, and ritual'.[324] While religious moral binaries have tied lightness to infer good and darkness bad; such strict dichotomy affirms each state as the absence of the other. The subterranean has been tied to a long lineage of funerary landscapes which further asserted the link between the darkness and death. This binary asserts the dark as a static realm occupied only by the dead; throughout antiquity the

[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables: Volume Two* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p.867.
[322] Haewon Hwang, *London's Underground Spaces: Representing the Victorian City, 1840-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.201.
[323] Yorke M. Rowan and David Ilan, 'The Subterranean Landscape of the Southern Levant during the Chalcolithic Period', in Holley Moyes (eds.), *Sacred Darkness: A Global Perspective on the Ritual Use of Caves Book* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), p.82.
[324] Andrew T. Chamberlain, 'Caves and the Funerary Landscape of Prehistoric Britain', in Holley Moyes (eds.), *Sacred Darkness: A Global Perspective on the Ritual Use of Caves* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), p.385.

darkened subterranean spaces were rich with sacred legacy and active in the 'ritual and ideological lives of humans'.[325] In the case of the Ramsgate Tunnels the experience of the darkness was different depending on where in the Tunnels the shelterer was located, as the disused Railway Tunnel was tall and lofty versus the enclosed more claustrophobic chalk wartime Tunnels.

Daniel R. Montello and Holley Moyes use dark spaces in caves as an example of the impact of an environment's physical characteristics upon psychological responses.[326] Montello and Moyes introduce here the theory of environmental aesthetics which dictate subterranean spaces as 'morphologically complex' and 'low-light', resulting in habitation only in 'desperate conditions' such as total warfare.[327] As places are not neutral, but are instead imbued with positive or negative 'affordances', subterranean sensory deprivation was deemed negative, for others it helped produce 'meditative states' stimulating otherworldly or 'imaginary geographies'.[328] In the case of Ramsgate, before the Second World War, the separation from the surface frightened the town's populace, but during the war its distance from the realities of aerial bombardment was its greatest asset. The way the mind experiences the world is filtered, as Andrew T. Chamberlain argues, through the interaction of the human body with the physical world.[329] The spatial lens utilises sensory dimensions such as darkness to read how bodies interact and experience space. As previously discussed in Chapter One Ramsgate's signposts were brought down to the Tunnels thereby mapping the subterranean space. Montello and Moyes argue that such sign systems were 'semiotic artifacts with the intention to reduce uncertainty' they utilise geographical gestures to influence behaviour and relationship to the environment.[330] Moreover, this suggests that human conceptions of place and space may be dependent on the

[325] Ibid.
[326] Daniel R. Montello and Holley Moyes, 'Why Dark Zones Are Sacred: Turning to Behavioural and Cognitive Science for Answers', in Holley Moyes (eds) *Sacred Darkness: A Global Perspective on the Ritual Use of Caves* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), p.389.
[327] Ibid. p.393.
[328] Ibid. p.394.
[329] Chamberlain, 'Caves and the Funerary Landscape', p.386.
[330] Montello and Moyes, 'Why Dark Zones Are Sacred', p.392.

relationships between 'real' physical environment and the 'imagined' topographies of human interpretation.[331]

The Home Front's landscape had been transformed by the Blitz, leaving as David Welsh puts it a darkened and abandoned metropolis.[332] In the case of Ramsgate the paradox between the wartime surface and underground is most striking. The subterranean world was the space where the everyday was carrying on while the surface had become the 'unknown territory' which pre-war was ascribed to the underground.[333] The Tunnels like other deep shelters offered their inhabitants an enhanced sense of stability and security however this feeling of safety did not necessarily indicate accurately the amount they actually obtained.[334] Objections to deep level sheltering such as the fear of being buried generally came from people that did not use them. Those that did shelter underground sought comfort and security from having at least 'three feet of earth' over their head.[335] While surface shelters felt like targets, underground shelters indulged a primal instinct to burrow away from danger. The psychological impact of hearing at night-time terrifying noises as bombers roared overhead and dropped their load, as surrounding buildings crumbled, and fires blazed meant that the allure of the subterranean was the promise of silence. Therefore, for many, as shown in the Mass Observation reports on deep sheltering, safety and security were tied to 'no noise'. [336] The subterranean darkness was a marker of its distance from the surface and therefore silence. The shelterers gained a point of confidence from the reassurance of not hearing the bombs or planes which subsequently allowed them to endure the subterranean environment.[337] The subterranean therefore offered its inhabitants not only physical but psychological comfort and protection due to its environmental character.

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[331] Dara Downey, Ian Kinane, and Elizabeth Parker, *Landscapes of Liminality Between Space and Place,* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd, 2016), p.3.
[332] David Welsh, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Liverpool: University Press, 2010), p.224.
[333] Ibid. p.225.
[334] Mass Observation, Shelter in London, The Psychology of sheltering, pp. 15-16.
[335] Ibid. pp. 16-20.
[336] Mass Observation, Shelter in London, p.8.
[337] Ibid.

Complicating the notion of subterranean darkness

The Second World War had reimagined the nation's relationship with darkness by its use as a means of civil defence. This case study of the Ramsgate Tunnels complicates the traditional perception of subterranean darkness by casting it as a protector and liberator. For Queer individuals, like writer Quentin Crisp, the darkness of blackout during the Second World War allowed a form of liberation from the constraints they were under in pre-war society. In Crisp's autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*, London under the cloak of darkness and the potency of danger turned into a 'playground' for illicit sexual encounters.[338] The sexual liberation Crisp found during the period of blackout was mirrored in the freedom Vera Ferris found in the Ramsgate Tunnels. In her oral testimony about sheltering as a teenager in the Tunnels during the Second World War Ferris described the liberating anonymity subterranean darkness offered to the youth. [339] The surreal environment of the 'Tunnel Town' gave the young shelterers a freedom which would have never existed before the Second World War. Vera was able to spend much of her time with her friends, have consistent access to what the adults in the community were doing, and attend weekly subterranean dances.[340] Therefore the subterranean darkness, just like blackout, created a specific wartime liberation which was embraced by the youth and the Queer alike.

William Herbert Gibson's personal papers provide one of the only surviving contemporary first-hand accounts documenting life in the Ramsgate Tunnels during their inhabitancy. From what is known about Gibson is that he was involved in the creation of the Tunnels and the mere existence of his account proved he personally had experienced its sheltering habitancy. His account not only provides a contemporary perspective of the space and how it was used but disputes all major assertions of life sheltering underground during the Second World War. There wasn't a sense of time passing in Gibson's description of the Tunnels; by his account the space was unceasingly alive with noise and lights that were never 'extinguished'.[341] The Tunnel's canteen was a hive of action, consumed with the constant comings and goings of inhabitants from throughout the Tunnel. This busyness with the lofty

[338] Quentin Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968).
[339] IWM Sound Archive 15825, Sally Kimber interviewing Vera Ferris for BBC Radio Kent.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid. p.121.

character of the disused Railway Tunnel created an atmosphere 'reminiscent of a French café'.[342] The canteen would carry on being occupied with social activity beyond the heightened 'illuminated funfair' period of the inhabitancy.

While the nation had been defined by the blackout the underground was not defined by the same absence of light. Instead, Gibson presents a Tunnel which, any time day or night, was a 'picture not unlike a gigantic fairground'.[343] This unfamiliar illustration of the subterranean described the specific moment of illumination within the Ramsgate Tunnels from its opening in 1939 to 1940. Whilst the 'little holiday steamers' and naval vessels were bringing in rescued troops from Dunkirk, the RAF was engaging in aerial combat during the Battle of Britain in the Kentish skies, and firefighters and ARP wardens were fighting the fires during the Blitz, Ramsgate's subterranean realm had become a funfair.[344] This illuminated funfair underground world evoked for Gibson the interior of the circus canopy, permeated with the thrill and 'unblinking cheerfulness' of its inhabitants. [345] In spatial terms a fairground is defined as a 'bordered region that encloses a set of objects', these objects 'instigate and afford a series of effects' which in turn create the funfair.[346] Before the Second World War the disused Railway Tunnel at one point housed a seaside fairground attraction; this history may have informed the 'funfair' description Gibson gave the illuminated space. The 1940 occupation and transformation of the Tunnels from an emergency deep level shelter into an illuminated vibrant town mirrored the key function of a fairground: to transform the original site for a limited period.[347] This funfair atmosphere was a micro expression of Ramsgate's seaside resort identity which had been supressed on the surface. The *Advertiser and Echo,* which would become the *Thanet Advertiser,* in 1939 published a piece on the 'magic Tunnel', declaring Ramsgate the 'most brilliantly illuminated' town in England, populated with an 'unblinking cheerfulness' that could not be matched even in the largest London Underground

[342] Ibid. p.124.
[343] Kent History and Library Centre, R/U99 Life in the Tunnels: The Diary: Papers of William Herbert Gibson of Ramsgate (1939-1945), p.120.
[344] JB Priestley, 'Postscripts' (5th of July, 1940), *BBC Archive,* [online] Timestamp: 03:10, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/postscripts--jb-priestley/zn9xkmn> [Accessed on: 03 September 2021].
[345] 'The Brightest Town in England: Wartime fairy-land', *Advertiser and Echo,* 29 September, 1939, p.5
[346] Ian Trowell, 'Difficult Fun: Fairground as Heritage, Heritage as Fairground' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2017), p.17.
[347] Ibid.

station.[348] Lavished in light and 'fresh and pure', Ramsgate's famous 'healthy promenades' were translated underground.[349] These novel conditions were believed to be temporary measures to help accustom the Ramsgate residents to 'living like troglodytes'.[350] This was an accurate contemporary assertion as by 1941 local government had introduced a byelaw which extinguished the illuminated funfair. Thus, Gibson's account captured a moment inhabiting the Ramsgate Tunnels which was unmitigated by external forces.

Whilst the nation had plummeted into total darkness, the space imagined as the darkest of all was illuminated and thriving. What makes this picture of an illuminated funfair in the Tunnels especially fascinating is the wider context of life on the Home Front, which was subject to the blackout. The blackout was the most immediate and invasive of the civil defence regulations which transformed daily life on the Home Front.[351] For cultural historian Juliet Gardiner blackout 'drained the vitality from people's lives' revealing the population's dependency on light. [352] The enforced darkness led to the development of public trepidation surrounding the outside which enclosed and isolated the Home Front into a 'smaller, gloomier world'.[353] A world in which one schoolteacher, (in the Mass Observation Report *Women in Wartime),* found herself wanting to sit down in middle of the road and weep.[354] The unpopularity of the blackout was nationally felt; it topped rankings of wartime inconveniences beyond the air raids themselves.[355] Blackout had become a mechanism which redefined individual relationships to the community and to the war.[356] There was a profound irony to this reversal of illumination, as the subterranean, a space defined by the absence of light, had become the brightest space in the nation. In

[348] 'The Brightest Town in England', p.5.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Headline, 2004), p.54; Marc Wiggam, *The Blackout in Britain and Germany, 1939–1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
[352] Ibid. p.58.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Mass Observation, *Women in Wartime* (July 1940), pp.1-2.
[355] Mass Observation, *Wartime Inconveniences* (December 1940).
[356] Marc Wiggam. 'The Blackout and the Idea of Community in Britain and Germany', In Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp, and Richard Overy (eds), *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p.10.

a similar paradox, while traditional markers of society were being destroyed on the surface, underground a new subterranean existence was being cultivated.

'Carrying on' within the darkness

Figure 13: Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940, 00:30 [screenshot] <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ramsgate-deep-shelter-1940> [Accessed on: 18 July 2021]

Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940 is a silent film, just under a minute and a half in length, which captured a scenes during the Ramsgate Tunnels occupation in 1940. Figure Thirteen is a screenshot from the film, capturing shelterers gathered around a wireless. This is an iconic image of the Second World War Home Front. The film opens with the Ramsgate Tunnels shelterers descending into the 'Tunnel Town' carrying in tow their belongings. The subterranean darkness is as much a character as the shelterers themselves in the message of the film. This docu-drama created narratives and stories from recreating or restaging these real-life events using real people, not actors. [357] For James Chapman, dramatic reconstructions reflected the ideological ends of their makers, as the film carefully and consistently

[357] James Chapman, 'Re-presenting War British Television Drama-Documentary and the Second World War', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol.10: No.1 (2007), 15-30 (p.15).

imposes its own meaning onto the events.[358] Docu-dramas are by their medium 'intimately tied to historical memory' as they do not only aim to reconstruct a historical narrative, but they also function as a historical document.[359] *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940* shared the techniques which characterised the series of docu-dramas made during the Second World War surrounding the theme of 'we can take it'.

London Can Take It! (1940) was perhaps the most famous of the films and is a striking example of the type of drama realism which was created during the Second World War. The film projects images of a Blitzed London landscape against Quentin Reynolds' stoic narration that bombs can 'destroy buildings and kill people' but they cannot kill the 'unconquerable spirit and courage of the people of London'.[360] Visually conceptualising the notion of 'we can take it' central to the Blitz spirit myth of unified civilian morale of unfaltering national unity against the enemy unrelenting nights.[361] Myth-making had a function not only as a means in which official avenues such as the Ministry of Information could bolster the war effort and civilian morale, but also, as Malcolm Smith argues, it was a means for the people to 'survive', gain composure, and carry on.[362] The myth was seductive as it offered a sense of escape and connection, grounding itself in human desire to understand themselves and the world around them.[363] The 'mythical' unified community populating the Home Front, which was the rhetoric of the Blitz spirit myth, held centre focus in the iconography of *London Can Take It!* (1940).[364] This was because the Ministry of Information wanted, as David Welsh emphasises, to stress that the Blitz was an 'attack on 'the people'.[365] This 'attack' in question was viewed as both a physical assault on Home Front population and metaphorically on British nationality. Underground sheltering became, as Welsh highlights, a symbol of civilian endurance and therefore a 'stage for national reconstruction'.[366]

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[358] Ibid. p.22.
[359] Paula Rabinowitz, 'Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory', *History and Theory*, Vol. 32: No. 2 (1993), 119-137 (p.121).
[360] Chapman, 'Re-presenting war', p.22.
[361] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!:Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004), pp.1-2.
[362] Malcom Smith, *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.29.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Welsh, *Underground Writing*, p.243.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid. p.245.

One could even argue that *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940* was a response, like *Manchester Can Take It Too!* (1941), to *London Can Take It!* (1940). These regional propaganda adaptations were, by their nature, in direct conversation with the image of the Blitz as a London-specific experience and the erasure of these micro-histories from the popular memory of the Blitz. Instead of focusing on the Blitz landscape, *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940* connected to this series of docu-drama films through its subterranean setting. Underground sheltering was used as an evocative symbol of 'Britain's will to continue fighting' thereby consolidating the 'national heart' within the war effort.[367] While initially being extensively criticised, subterranean sheltering was depicted in films like *Christmas Under Fire* (1940), as the setting of a 'steadfast national community under siege'.[368] *Christmas Under Fire* (1940) shared a similar entrance to the subterranean setting as *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940,* with the camera descending into the space. The descent, in *Christmas Under Fire* (1940), takes place on an escalator gradually approaching the occupied Underground platform. The camera, while following the Tube tracks, pans over the rows of sleeping bodies. Figure Five focuses with a similar intensity upon the resting and sleeping portraits of the shelterers; unlike *Christmas Under Fire* (1940) the camera pauses on a family. Sleep and rest are important themes within these docu-dramas of underground sheltering for two distinct reasons. Firstly, the ability to rest and recuperate despite the devastation of total war was the ultimate image of life carrying on. The second is the paradox of subterranean darkness being a restful and relaxing space despite its long cultural lineage as an unnerving place. In both films the sleeping bodies shown are grouped together asserting a collective sheltering identity. Figure Five focuses on the shelterers as individuals as shown in its depiction of one particular family together in their makeshift sheltering home.

[367] Welsh, *Underground Writing*, p.242.
[368] Ibid. p.243.

Figure 14: Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940, 01:18 [screenshot] <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ramsgate-deep-shelter-1940> [Accessed on: 18 July 2021]

Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940 is most evidently part of the genre of docu-dramas with its use of restaging to narrate the meaning of the film. The Blitz spirit myth was contemporaneously bolstered by newsreels and propaganda such as docu-drama which often restaged scenes to illustrate stories of resilience and heroism. Fred Morley's 1940s image *Delivery After Raid*, which captured a milkman delivering in a devastated London was a contemporarily iconic visualisation of daily life enduring. This famous picture was staged by Morley, as a culmination of what he had witnessed during the Blitz and what he wanted to depict of the Home Front. *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940* was part of this wider multi-medium movement which focused on domestic and everyday themes within the wartime context to encourage morale. *Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940* illustrated the demands of the wartime state and the endurance of the Home Front population through the visual narrative of everyday life carrying on within the darkness of the subterranean. The lesser well known *'Britain Can Take it!'* (1940) also portrayed the maintenance of social rituals amongst the chaos of the wartime context, for example, a man shaving amongst the bomb wreckage of his home, or the milk man delivering to a house half destroyed by an air raid. This is suggested by the film's single focus on the main disused Railway Tunnel and 'Tunnel Town', rather than the more surreal wartime-built Tunnel. Figure Fourteen (like Figure Twelve and Thirteen before it) documented this domestic time spent underground as discussed in Chapter Two; there was no dead time in the subterranean, rather the population adapted daily life to the darkness. As

Figures Fifteen and Sixteen illustrate, games of cards were played around oil lamps, and domestic leisure activities continued such as reading, knitting, and smoking. These restaged scenes were based on real happenings in the Tunnels, but they were recreated for the film. The shelterers would have been aware of the camera and the film unit filming them and thus their behaviour would have been affected and altered by this knowledge.

Figure 15: Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940, 00:37 [screenshot] <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ramsgate-deep-shelter-1940> [Accessed on:18 of July 2021]

Figure 16: Ramsgate Deep Shelter 1940, 00:46 [screenshot] <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ramsgate-deep-shelter-1940> [Accessed on: 18 July 2021]

The experience of the Ramsgate Tunnels was not static; the space evolved and was altered by the dwellers themselves. In a similar way to the London Underground shelterers, the Ramsgate Tunnels populace took the space into their own hands, altering the original vision of the local authorities. The

Tunnel population were able to achieve a sense of permanency, something completely contradictory to the transient nature of sheltering in the transport network which was the London Underground. This permanency has survived beyond the duration of the Second World War, as the Ramsgate Tunnels were abandoned after their occupation thus leaving the space naturally preserved. Unlike, transient sheltering spaces such as the London Underground which, with purposes beyond its wartime employment, were constantly altered. The abandonment of the Tunnels and the shifting London Underground landscape were symbolic of post-war efforts towards moving on from the Second World War. Whereas the Ramsgate Tunnels space has remained entrenched and imbued in its wartime context. The Tunnel's landscape became a witness to the sheltering experience, as traces of the social interaction and experience-making are retained in the landscape of the site.

Conclusion

In the case of the Ramsgate Tunnels, the main environmental element the shelterers navigated, experienced, and lived within was the subterranean darkness. By analysing the shelterers' relationship with the darkness, a strong impression can be forged as to how the Tunnel dwellers experienced that specific period of permanent liminality. This chapter has focused on the different ways darkness was understood and experienced by the shelterers during the Second World War. The wartime context saw darkness transcending its 'kingdom of death' perception into a space that promised security, not the absolute absence of light, and as a symbol of civilian endurance on the Home Front. The theoretical framework of this chapter hinged on the spatial lens' interpretation of the Tunnel space as the witness to how the Ramsgate population experienced and lived through the Second World War. Thereby evoking the theory of the locality of memory: that the space where it happened acts as a tangible link to the past.

Concluding Thoughts

The Second World War, and the Blitz more specifically, has remained central and exceptionally resonant throughout popular culture. Angus Calder explained this unprecedented cultural status of the Second World War as due to the role of total war and the Home Front asserting the people as the 'protagonist in their own history'.[369] The Blitz epitomised this centrality due to its unimaginable and indescribable destruction against civilian landscapes. American correspondent Edward R. Murrow famously typified the 'unreality' of the Blitz by two cans of peaches in September 1940:

> 'One night I stood in front of a smashed grocery store and heard a dripping inside. It was the only sound in all London. Two cans of peaches had been drilled clean through by flying glass, and the juice was dripping down onto the floor.'
>
> *Two cans of peaches*, CBS London, 13 September 1940, Edward R Murrow[370]

For academics such as Sharon Sliwinski this surrealist character of the Blitz was best captured and communicated visually; as such 'dream-like' photography offered a 'glimpse' into the interior dimension of the human existence.[371] Therefore in the cultural memory of the Second World War these evocative images, typically of London, have come to embody the civilian experience. The traditional paradigm of the Blitz myth used these images to depict the civilian and sheltering experience as homogenous.[372] In periods of crisis such as the Covid-19 Pandemic the Blitz myth has been evoked as a historical reference of unparalleled national unity and endurance. This work has built upon the revisionist work of Angus Calder to advocate for the nuance that case studies such as the Ramsgate Tunnels can give to wider perception of the civilian experience of the Blitz and therefore sheltering. In particular, this Ramsgate Tunnels case study has highlighted the role of space and topography, as well as class in individualising and regionally distinguishing the sheltering experience.

[369] Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1969), p.17.
[370] Edward R. Murrow, *This Is London* (New York: Schocken, 1989), p.175.
[371] Sharon Sliwinski, 'Air War and Dream: Photographing the London Blitz', *American Imago*, Vol. 68: No. 3 (2011), 489-516.
[372] Lola Serraf, 'Elizabeth Bowen's «Mysterious Kôr»: Narrating the Blitz Outside the Myth's Paradigm', *Revista de Filología Románica*, Vol. 33l (2016), 203-212 (p.203).

The Ramsgate Tunnels was a public deep shelter with the characteristics of a private shelter therefore offering an original perspective of underground sheltering during the Second World War as this work has shown. While other deep shelters, such as the Chislehurst Caves shared some similarities with the Ramsgate Tunnels, none were, purpose built, designed, and organised for and by the local population. The creation of 'Tunnel Town' showed the autonomy of the sheltering population to not only make home underground but community. The spatial transformation the seaside community went through during this period was indicative of the larger changes which occurred under the arrival of total warfare.

Historically, Ramsgate was spatially defined by its coastal topography and so the consequences of total war transformed not only the town's landscape but also its identity. By focussing on areas which have been neglected from sheltering historiography, in this case the coast, this study has brought light to factors such as location, class, accessibility, topography and relationship with space. This study has reshaped perceptions of sheltering as not necessarily temporary during the Second World War and enhanced historiography of the Blitz and our wider understanding of the Home Front, how values of order, domestication and community were translated into the subterranean. Within the Ramsgate Tunnels, people remade home, in both physical and psychological ways. The study has highlighted the regional and landscape dependent nature of sheltering. Ramsgate is unique, as one of the only examples of the lessons of the Spanish Civil War being applied to the Home Front in the wake of aerial bombardment.

The Ramsgate tunnels still have relevance today not only in the development of cultural history and social memory but also shaping how communities react to periods of crisis, showing the difference and the value from multiple recollections. The Collective experience - the effect, the fall out, the societal level - is significant in how we view ourselves, the nation and the home. As has been shown in the Covid-19 Pandemic there is always a need to look back at periods of previous historical relevance. The identity of the Ramsgate community is informed by its history who they are, and their significance within the Coastal region, and in particular, as this study shows, the juxtaposition of perceptions about Ramsgate above and below ground.

This study has highlighted the effect the wartime context had upon perceptions of landscapes and topography across the Home Front as demonstrated in the example of the Ramsgate Tunnels reimagining of Ramsgate. From a seaside resort associated with light, fresh air and health, to a subterranean space defined by darkness and poor hygiene. The wartime transformation of Ramsgate's spatial identity with the underground and surface reflected the impact of total war on the civilian relationship to the Home Front. This dissertation has made the case for how the sheltering landscape of the Ramsgate Tunnels and its 'Tunnel Town' can adjust our understanding of the Second World War and the sheltering experience. This study has used the process of understanding how Ramsgate recreated a sense of home and 'normality' within the subterranean environment as a means of engaging with the larger question of the civilian experience of hygiene, leisure, and privacy on the Home Front. Therefore, by focusing on this micro-study of how the sheltering population lived each day, domesticated the environment, preserved pre-war social rituals, and adjusted to the dramatic spatial shift, this dissertation has divulged how life 'carried on' on the Home Front.

This dissertation has explored social and cultural history behind the themes of lightness and darkness, and has engaged with the larger themes of blackout, safety and security. The darkness of the underground is widely typified as subversive and dangerous, however as the study shows, the Ramsgate Tunnels brought about a change in the spatial idea of safety and security: the surface as dangerous and the subterranean as security, as home. This work has answered, through the example of Ramsgate, the effect the Blitz had upon the spatial philosophies of communities. Spaces have their own agency which comes from their ability to influence emotions and behaviour and therefore, the sheltering experience on the Home Front was spatially defined.

The analytic innovation of this study comes from the application of both the methodological and spatial theoretical framework to the Ramsgate Tunnels subterranean space. This work utilised the traditional methodologies of cultural history in an original way through focusing on the subterranean space as a primary source. The spatial analytical framework focuses on the subterranean space of the Ramsgate Tunnels as the spatial witness to the civilian sheltering experience. The Ramsgate Tunnels site retains a spatial narrative of the sheltering experience thus the material culture, visual culture and

oral history is understood in relation to and context of the space. In this manner this study utilises 'Britain's greatest untapped resource' in the cultural studies of the Second World War: the air raid shelter.[373] This study used the spatial lens to engage with the state of permanent liminality experienced by the shelterers during the Second World War. Therefore, it also used an elemental and anthropological approach to investigate how the space was navigated through the specific sensory experience of its wartime context. This spatial history of the Ramsgate Tunnels brings to light how the underground shelterers interacted with, altered, and related to the subterranean space, creating a version of home within the landscape of the Tunnels.

Figure 17: 'Reconstruction of an enclosure', Imogen Herd, 24 August, 2019.

This work on Ramsgate Tunnels could be further developed to engage with how the space has been used today as a heritage site. The Ramsgate Tunnels Museum used the restaging of the 'Tunnel Town' landscape as a means of mapping and contextualising how the shelterers transformed and domesticated the space. The reconstruction of the materials in the way they were documented was a means of activating the space and therefore promoting memory. The Ramsgate Tunnels like other museums and heritage sites are cultural spaces which evolve to answer contemporary demands. Resulting in the rise of 'immersive heritage' which, as Evinc Dogan defines, shared the same goal of

[373] Gabriel Moshenska, *The Archaeology of the Second World War: Uncovering Britain's Wartime Heritage* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Archaeology, 2013), p.121.

'bringing alive' the past but through the historic site and therefore enriching the visitor's experience.[374] Restaging was a method through which the material dimensions used within the space were reconstructed to provide the visitor with the visual language of the sheltering experience. Dogan argues that heritage sites used such interactive elements to foster visitors creating meaning through interchanging imagination and performance with the space.[375]

To end with the words of 'Ramsgate Bard' Walter Knapton Lewis, who may himself have sheltered in the Ramsgate Tunnels:

The Tunnel is calling! Oh, dear; oh, dear!

A home in the earth when the foe's in the sky.

The tunnel's your ark if you don't want to die.

The Call of the Tunnels, Walter K. Lewis [376]

[374] Evinc Dogan, and M. Hamdi Kan, 'Bringing Heritage Sites to Life for Visitors: Towards A Conceptual Framework for Immersive Experience', *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research* (AHTR), Vol.8: No.1 (2020), 76-99 (p.77).
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