

# *Covid 19/Coronavirus.*

*By Geoffrey O'Connell*

During New Zealand Nation's lockdown this year due to the Coronavirus global outbreak, I have been led to consider the wider considerations of the '*scourge*'. In pondering the disease, it has to be understood that it has, is and will affect all of us wherever we are in the world for many years to come. What is he babbling on about? Well to clarify the latter thought it is necessary to consider the immense consequences of the pandemic that have already taken place in some 7 weeks from the declaration of the Level 4 lockdown. Consider the by now unimaginable effects on international travel, more especially the airline and cruise liners companies throughout the world. In this respect reflect on what will happen to the worldwide manufacture of aircraft, liners and vehicles. For New Zealanders it is necessary to deliberate about the (lack of) future of hotels, restaurants and bars, on the hospitality industry, high street shopping centres and shopping malls, tourist companies, travel agents and car sales firms. What happens to the previous tourist '*hotspots*' such as Milford Sounds, Queenstown, Rotorua and the Chateau Tongariro Hotel on the slopes of Mount Ruapehu. What will be the future of all sports? Radio Sport closed down at the end of March and, incidentally, at the outset of April the Bauer media group closed all its New Zealand publishing operations.

Incidentally in the following information all dates and figures quoted are an average of the available statistics.

As a '*starter for five*' until the late 1800s epidemic and pandemic were interchangeable descriptions of a deadly disease. Thereabouts epidemic was taken to describe a disease that affected one community or a number of countries whilst pandemic referred to the '*worldwide*' spread of a disease.

Secondly up until the 12<sup>th</sup> May this year due to Covid 19 there have been 292,291 worldwide deaths, and that in a global population of 7.7 billion. Also on that date NZ had incurred 21 losses. It is of interest at this stage to advise that a well-respected UK College has suggested that very approximately the difference between the death rate experienced in normal conditions and that of a period of pandemic Covid 19 is that people who would pass away are doing so very much quicker than would be expected but that there are not many more deaths as a result of the disease. Furthermore, that some nine out of ten people dying as a result of the pandemic already have underlying health conditions such as heart disease, dementia and respiratory illness.

Thirdly it is rather thought-provoking to consider some of the world's previous pandemics. To select but a few, the following are quite relevant in considering the number of deaths.

**The Antonine Plague** –AD. 165-180. Possibly the acute contagious viral disease of smallpox which laid waste to some 5 million people in the Roman Empire. The population of the world was estimated to be some 195 million.

**Plague of Justinian** – AD 541-542. A Bubonic Plague, an infection spread by infected fleas from small animals, which killed some 30 million people of the Byzantine Empire and Mediterranean Port Cities. At that time the world population was some 210 million.

**The Black Death** – 1346-1353. A Bubonic Plague which laid waste to about 200 million humans of a world population of approximately 443 million.

**The Third Plague** – 1885-1860. A Bubonic Plague resulting in approximately 12 million deaths in China and India of a global population of some 1.2 billion.

**The Spanish Flu** – 1918-1920. Quoted as the deadliest worldwide flu pandemic ever. It reportedly infected some 500 million people and the death rate was estimated to have killed at least 50 million humans. However, as much of the then known world was unknown it is considered that there may well have been up to 100 million victims, out of a then calculated global population of 1.8 billion. In comparison the casualties and deaths of civilians and soldiers attributable to WW1 (28<sup>th</sup> July 1914-11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1918) were a total of some 40 million wounded of which between 15 and 22 million died.

Without doubt the flu did not originate in Spain. On the other hand, not only was Spain neutral in WW1, it had a free and uninterfered with media. Hence it was the country that first covered the flu outbreak in Madrid newsprint in late May 1918. The source of the disease is debatable but the first recorded case was at the US Army training base at Camp Funston at Fort Riley, Kansas on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1918. It is also suggested that the infected soldiers carried the disease to other military camps and then overseas, mainly to the Western Front in Europe.

**Asian Flu** – 1957-1958. A mix of avian and human influenza viruses originating in China which killed some 1.1 million people when the world population was 2,873,000,000.

**Hong Kong Flu** – 1968-1970. A pandemic which probably originated in Hong Kong, if not China. It killed some 1 million humans when the global population was approximately 3,700,000,000.

**HIV/AIDS pandemic** – 1981 to nowadays. HIV is an initialism for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, whilst AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency. HIV can lead to AIDS which is the killer. HIV is understood to have originated in Kinshasa, then in the Belgian Congo and now the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was around about 1920 when it crossed over from chimpanzees to humans. Since the inception of the pandemic some 32 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses during which time the global population has grown from some 4,537,000,000 to 7,713,468,100 in 2019.

Back at the Coronavirus '*front*' in New Zealand. Prior to Level 4 coming into force disquieting incidents involved mass panic buying especially of sanitising hand lotion and toilet rolls – yes, toilet rolls - at the supermarkets. Generally, the citizens behaviour under the strict requirements of Level 4 would appear to have been excellent, however ..... A most alarming occurrence was the appalling habit of admittedly a very, very small minority of miscreants to spit at supermarket staff and the police, both bodies who were simply attempting to enforce the particular distancing and travelling rules in force. Woe is them!

# Memories of the London Blitz





Under Level 3 the free-wheeling nature of the Kiwi people resulted in a number of rule-breaking incidents, more especially in and around the beaches and public areas. To Rose and I, the restrictions and requirements imposed in order to counter Coronavirus could not but forcibly remind us of our far-off youth. We were both born in Great Britain at the outbreak of WW2 in 1940 and during and after the conflict the citizenry endured a very restrictive life. To put the two occasions in perspective it might assist readers if they were reminded of those long-ago constraints.

## More memories of the London Blitz



As a starter for ten, prior to the outbreak of hostilities and during that conflict there was no such thing as a supermarket, which only first appeared in 1948. The shopping opportunities of the average town and village were available at shops specialising in a limited number of items such as: bakeries; butchers; clothing; confectionary/sweets; dairies; fishmongers; greengrocers; groceries; ironmongers; newsagents/books; poultry; shoes/cobblers; and tobacconists. 'Corner Stores' were usually situated on the corner of a T junction or the crossroads of a rural community. They were in effect a convenience shop which stocked a wide range of popular goods, sold newspapers, some stationary and more often than not had a Post Office counter. The High Streets of large towns and cities usually boasted one or more Department Store, in addition to the usual shops.

Be they hamlets, villages, towns or cities, the daily delivery of milk in ½ pint and 1 pint sized bottles to doorsteps of the houses by the aptly named 'milkman' was an every-day occurrence. He would often also be able to sell bread and eggs. In country areas that might be by a horse drawn cart but more usually was carried out by a 'milk float'. Rural areas more especially benefitted from weekly to the door deliveries by motorised vans. A van might well deliver groceries, fish or meat. Incidentally, other weekly deliveries/collections then included the coalman delivering one hundredweight sacks of coal and dustmen emptying the household dustbin. An added 'delight' might well be the 'rag and bone' man.

However, a number of restrictions made wartime life especially difficult. There were few restaurants apart from 'Lyons Corner Houses', but they were supplemented by wartime establishments run by the local authorities in schools and church halls called 'British Restaurants'. Public Houses often 'ran dry' and in country areas were often only open for trade on weekends.

At the average pub the sustenance might well be packets of crisps, a pickled egg from a glass jar containing the same and, from time to time, some ham or egg sandwiches. Whatever, the greatest burden on the British public had to be wartime rationing of almost everything. This was controlled with 'Ration Books' issued to each and every person, including children, and was bought into effect on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1940. That was apart from Petrol, or 'Motor Spirit' as it was described on the ration book, which went on ration some 13 days after Great Britain's declaration of war with Germany on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939. In 1942 petrol for private use was totally stopped and from then on was only available in connection with work considered to be essential to the wartime effort. Bread was replaced by a wholemeal flour offering known as the 'National Loaf'. Reputably it was grey, mushy and unappetising. Over the ensuing years various items were added to the coupon restriction with, for instance, clothes being rationed in June 1941 and soap in February 1942. Some items were never rationed and they included: bread; potatoes; salt; fruit and vegetables; nor fresh fish; as well as some meat items including offal, rabbit, game and chicken.

Despite that lack of control it was almost impossible to find fruit, vegetables or fish. There is a surprise! In March 1942 the household supply of electricity and gas were rationed. Several items of WW2 remain etched on my memory. Firstly, the ubiquitous loo rolls in the toilet cubicle. When paper shortages struck home the traditional toilet papers were replaced with torn-up newspaper hanging on a loop of string. My Father was of the opinion that the black newsprint besmirched your nether regions. But he would!

The second article was the canned meat 'Spam' introduced in the US in 1937. It was comprised of pork, salt water, modified potato starch sugar and sodium nitrate packed in a 12oz rectangular can with a ring-pull opener.

During WW2 it became part of the staple diet all over the world, especially to the Allied armed forces.

So taking into account the above it would appear that Covid 19 is not such a world-stopper, more especially to daily life in New Zealand, even under the various levels of lockdown. On the other hand, its consequences could be the gravest ever on the way of life that we have heretofore experienced. There is a thought!

Once again no mention of a motor car, let alone a Jaguar.

*Geoffrey*