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32p

Rasen man says 'grazie' to family who saved his life

A MARKET Rasen man has been reunited with an Italian family which saved his life during World War II.

While Albert Rhoades was on the run from German soldiers, he was taken in by Augusta and Gilio Bernato at a huge risk to themselves and their family. Albert had been transferred from a concentration camp in Southern Italy to a Working Party in the village of Velon near Verona when he made his dash for freedom. Albert and a fellow escapee were in hiding in the countryside near the village and were living off stolen grapes. They were discovered by Gilio Bernato as they hid amongst his vines. The two men were badly in need of nourishment and Albert's friend was suffering from a severely wounded leg. He immediately took pity on the British soldiers, bringing food for several days before inviting them to hide in their house for two weeks. But as the Nazis' search intensified they had to move out to the safer lanes of the countryside. They took refuge in the family's hut (see picture) where they remained for six weeks.

Eventually the men felt that the family's sacrifice was too much to ask and that it was unfair to put them at such a risk. Albert said: "It was a terrible risk for them to take. They were practically forfeiting their lives. If the Germans had found out what they were doing, the family would really have suffered. They were very worried that they were going to get caught."

The search for the two men continued to intensify and they decided to move on. Albert said: "It was a miracle they didn't find us. The Germans regularly searched small country huts like the one we were hiding in but they seemed to overlook this one."

Unfortunately, however, the men's luck ran out when they left the Bernatos and they were recaptured and sent to Poland.

But the story didn't end there. Albert was so moved by the generosity of the Bernatos that years later, when the war had ended, he went to search out the family and offer them his heartfelt thanks. He made it back to Verona in 1960 and with little idea of his whereabouts, took a taxi to a village that seemed familiar. When he arrived he asked an old man leaning against a gate if he knew of a Bernato family in the area. The man immediately invited Albert into his house where his wife threw her arms around him. Whilst Albert may have had trouble recognising Augusta and Gilio - or Mama and Papa as he affectionately calls them - they clearly knew him at once! As a parting gift, Gilio presented Albert with a bottle of wine that he had helped to make during his stay more than fifteen years earlier.

Albert had by this time forged a close bond with the Bernatos and even after 'mama' and 'papa' sadly died in 1978 and 1973 respectively, he maintained contact with their son Amelio and his family. Although they speak no English, Albert has managed

to pick up enough Italian from his various visits for stilted conversation of a sort.

Amelio and his wife Agnese have been staying with Albert - or Alberto as they call him - and his wife Edith for the past week. It is the couple's first visit to England which they described as 'multo bene!' They are accompa-

nied by their daughter Anna Linda and her husband Paolo who also stayed with the Rhoades' during their honeymoon in 1981.

Albert is thrilled that the family have been able to come and stay in Market Rasen. He says that it is a way of returning their parents' special hospitality all those years ago.



A special kind of hospitality - Albert (centre) and Edith (right) Rhoades welcome Amelio (centre right) and Agnese (centre left) Bernato, with their daughter Anna Linda and husband Paolo (left), whose family saved Albert's life during the war.

Clean-up needed - rat seen in town street

RATS are wandering the streets of Market Rasen in broad daylight according to town resident, Richard Adamski.

Mr Adamski claims that he was not the only person to see a rodent walking across Queen Street as shoppers, traders and children went about their business during a lunch time last week. And, speaking at this month's town council meeting, he said: "Town Councillors ought to be ashamed of themselves for allowing the town to become so dirty. I have never seen the town in such a disgusting state in all my years in Market Rasen. It sets a bad example to the young. It's absolutely terrible."

But, chairman and town

Mayor, Cllr Josie Clairmont-Brook, insisted that Market Rasen was not as bad as Mr Adamski claimed, adding: "The town does need a clean up and we already have plans to do just that."

Cllr Clairmont-Brook, who was repeatedly forced to ask Mr Adamski to 'shut up,' explained that there would be a clean up campaign taking place on Saturday, July 24. "We are looking for volunteers to help us on that day and if you care about the town so much then you are free to come and help us," she said.

The Town Council will be writing to West Lindsey to express their concern about the sightings of rats in Market Rasen.



Amelio Bernato and grandson outside the hut where Rasen man Albert Rhoades found refuge during the war.

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