RATIONS

A VERY PECULIAR HISTORY

ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE

Your Ration Book

Issued to safeguard your food supply

HOLDER'S NAME AND REGISTERED ADDRESS

COMPARE WITH YOUR IDENTITY CARD AND REPORT ANY DIFFERENCE TO YOUR FOOD OFFICE
DO NOT ALTER

Surname _____

Other Names _____

Address _____

_____

NAT. REG. NO. | | |

Date of Issue - 7 JUL 1941

Serial Number of Book PT

If found, please return to

CITY OF WESTMINSTER.
FOOD OFFICE.

Rations
A Very Peculiar History™

With NO added butter

'Do not rest on your spades, except for those brief periods which are every gardener's privilege.'

Lord Woolton, Minister for Food.

For my grandchildren –
that they never go hungry

DA

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Rations A Very Peculiar History™

With NO added butter

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'Dig for victory'
Ministry of Agriculture slogan
to promote the growing of food

'Doctor Carrot –
the children's best friend'
Government wartime slogan

'The ration book diet was difficult to follow and was boring and monotonous, but events have proved that it was actually good for you.'
Cookery writer Marguerite Patten

'Make do and mend'
Government campaign to promote the recycling of clothing and other materials

'When you feel tired of your old clothes, remember that by making them do you are contributing some part of an aeroplane, a gun or a tank.'
The President of the Board of Trade

Contents

YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS!

For Britons, the nightly bombing raids were the very worst thing about the second world war, and stumbling about in the pitch darkness because of the blackout was a pretty grim experience, too – but can you imagine the endless dreariness of standing in queues every day in the hope of buying something that had probably run out long before you reached the shop door?

There were shortages of food, of clothes, of coal to keep warm (nearly everyone had a coal fire in those days) and even of comfortable chairs to sit on if your old one wore out.

The government introduced rationing at the beginning of 1940 in order to make things as fair as possible. Without it, rich people could have bought as much as they liked, and that would have left very little for everyone else.

There were, as we shall see, crafty ways of getting round the regulations, but by and large everyone suffered together.

And if they complained, there was a common, exasperated response: 'Don't you know there's a war on?'

Those queues

It's often said that the British habit of patiently and politely standing in line was learnt in wartime.

What's certainly true (it comes up in so many memoirs) is that people would often join a queue without any idea of what they might find at the end of it. Mothers would thrust money into their children's hands with strict instructions to bring home whatever they could afford.

Doing it by the book

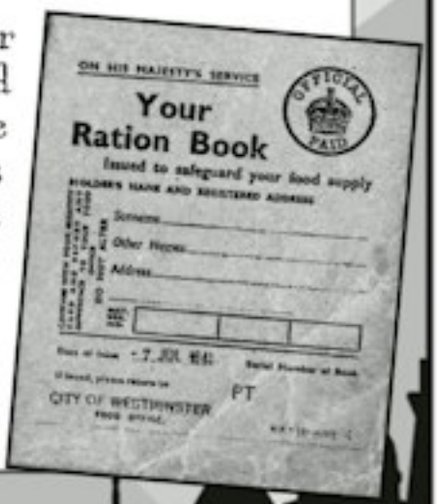
Everyone had a ration book during the war – beige for adults, blue for school children and pink for babies and toddlers. You had to register with a local grocer and a local butcher, and they were the only shops from which you could buy rationed food.

The coupons in the book weren't a substitute for money. They simply allowed you to buy your fair share – assuming that you could afford it in the first place.

The amount everyone was allowed depended on how scarce or plentiful it was at the time, which meant that the quota might vary from one month to the next.

Meat was rationed by cost rather than weight, so that you could choose between a small cut of something expensive or a joint of something cheap.

A points system covered other items, such as canned food and clothing. Everyone had the same number of points, and (as with meat) you could splurge them on something special or eke them out to buy several smaller things – if you could find them!



And if they didn't need it? That wasn't a problem, because they could promptly sell it to someone who did – probably at a small profit.

A sense of humour helped people get by. Before the war there was a popular comic song called 'Yes, we have no bananas', and during the war shopkeepers would display the title in their windows, as bananas were a great rarity for years.

One shop, still operating despite a gaping hole in the wall after a bombing raid, sported a tongue-in-cheek notice which read 'Open for business'.

A royal dribble

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth set the nation a good example by living frugally at Buckingham Palace when they could have left London and lived safely on one of their country estates.

They even had a 5 inch (12.7 cm) line painted near the bottom of their bath to show how much water they should use.

No, there wasn't a shortage of water, but the government had suggested that 5 inches of water was how much a whole family should use in a week – between them! – in order to save the electricity used to heat it.

We don't know whether the king and queen followed this advice and shared their puddle, but when America's First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, visited the palace in the autumn of 1941 (shortly before the United States entered the war) she was shocked by the spartan conditions in which they were living.

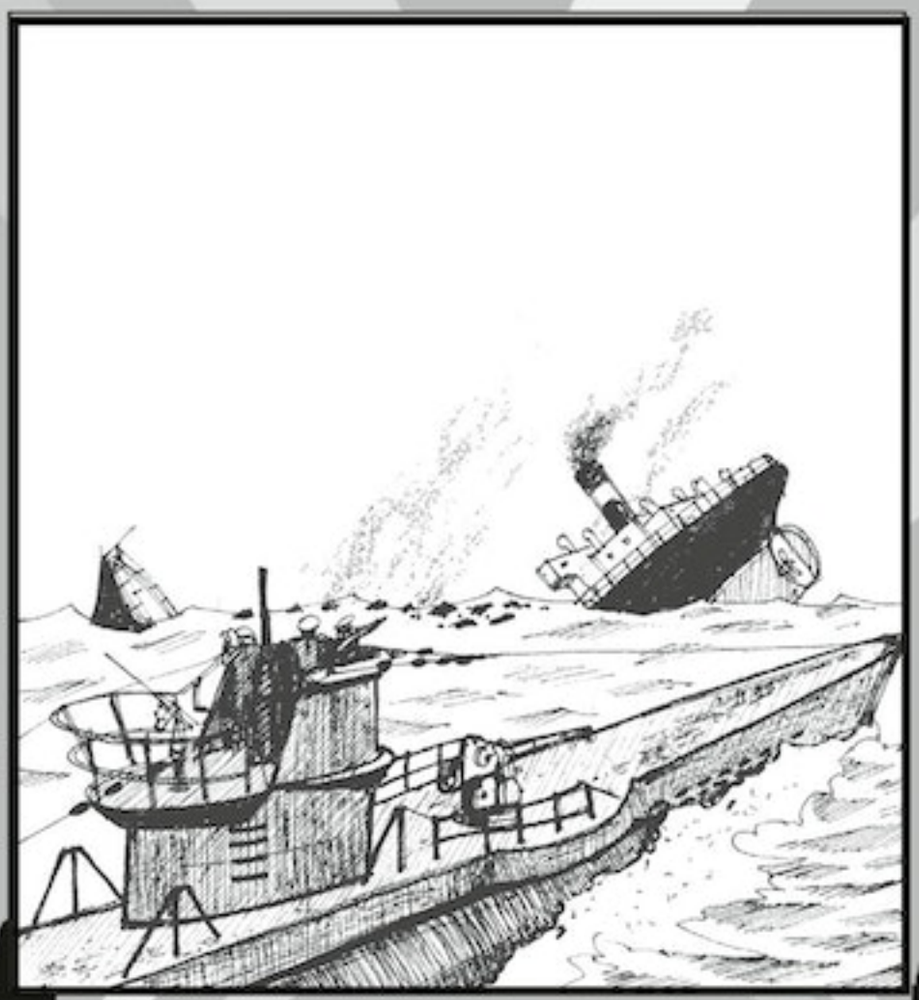
The bath water was shallow, there was no heating and she found only one electric bulb in each room.

Yes, there was indeed a war on – but how had things become so very desperate?

WHY WE RAN SHORT

All countries import goods they can't make or grow themselves, but at the time war broke out Britain relied on other countries to a worrying degree. More than 50 million tons of food were being shipped in every year – and that amounted to a staggering 60 per cent of everything we ate.

Being an island meant that we couldn't easily be overrun by an invading army as so many European countries were from 1939 onwards, but it also left us dangerously isolated unless we could control the seas around us.



Germany's U-boats were responsible for many sunken trade ships.

Those waters were now patrolled by fast German E-boats carrying guns and torpedoes, while beneath the waves enemy U-boat submarines hunted our merchant vessels in deadly 'wolf packs' which would come to the surface at night to fire their torpedoes.

Many British cargo boats were needed to transport troops and to carry munitions and other material vital to the war effort. Others did continue to bring food to our shores, but in the early months of the war they were being destroyed at a frightening rate.

During the so-called Battle of the Atlantic, ships bringing food, fuel, equipment and raw materials from North America were being lost at the rate of sixty a month: the final toll was all of 2,500.

Some 30,000 Allied seamen perished while taking part in this epic struggle which was crucial to Britain's very survival.

No wonder Winston Churchill later wrote that 'the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril'.

Counting the pennies

If you began doing sums with money after the pound was divided into a hundred pennies in 1971 ('decimilisation') you may find some of the figures in this book rather confusing.

This is the system people had to cope with during the war years:

- The pound was divided into 20 shillings.
- The shilling – commonly called a 'bob' – was divided into 12 pennies, or pence, so that there were 240 pennies in a pound.
- The penny was divided into two half-pennies (or ha'pennies, pronounced *hay*-pennies) and four farthings (meaning 'fourths').

Your pockets soon wore out because there were so many different coins. The pound was available only as a note (there was a ten-shilling note, too), but the penny was large and heavy, and on top of the shilling, ha'penny and farthing there was a half-crown (two-and-a-half shillings), the florin (two shillings), the little silver sixpence – known as a 'tanner' – and the hexagonal three-penny (pronounced *thru*-penny) bit.

Phew!

Oh, and you also have to come to terms with the way the figures were written down, because they can look rather puzzling.

- The pound, as now, was a kind of 'L' (£) after the Latin 'librum'.

- The shilling could appear as an 's' (1s.), but you'll often find it shown as 1/-. If you come across, for example, 3/9, that means three shillings and nine pence – or 45 pence. (Wake up at the back, there!)

- The penny was written as a 'd', after the Latin 'denarius', so that two pence (known as 'tuppence') appears as 2d.

Here's a translation of the old money into today's currency:

Ten shillings = 50p
Five shillings = 25p
One shilling = 5p
Sixpence = 2.5p
A penny = not worth bothering about!

Beware of making simple comparisons, though. A pound would buy you a lot more in those days, but most people didn't have nearly as many of them in those threadbare pockets of theirs – a man's average weekly wage was less than £4.

You could buy a mountain of sweets with a pound note – but you'd never be given one!

Little by little the Allies learned to counter the U-boat threat. For one thing, ships now sailed together in convoys, escorted by small warships (Corvettes) and supported by long-range RAF Liberator marine patrol aircraft.

The code-breakers

And then, in May 1941, the Royal Navy captured one of the German submarines and seized its 'Enigma' machine. This was a device for scrambling messages into a code that was

Under the counter

Shopkeepers would often keep unrationed goods off the shelves, reserving them for their regular customers.

This wasn't illegal as long as they charged the price that had been fixed by the government to ensure that nobody made unreasonable profits at a time of severe shortages.

Hopeful customers would ask if there was anything 'under the counter'. Often there was nothing there at all – but it was certainly worthwhile making friends with your butcher and grocer just in case there was.

supposed to outwit the enemy, but a team of brilliant men and women at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire had worked out how to *un*scramble them.

The Allies could now tune in to German radio signals and work out the routes ships should take to avoid areas where the U-boats clustered in large numbers.

By May 1943 Admiral Dönitz, the German commander, had lost two-thirds of his submariners (some 28,000 men) and no fewer than 781 U-boats. He conceded defeat: the Battle of the Atlantic was over.

The good news was that more goods and equipment could now flow into Britain, whose heavily bombed population was quite literally feeling the pinch.

The bad news? There were still years of scrimping and saving ahead.

Never mind those bananas – there were shortages of practically all the foodstuffs people had once taken for granted.

National Registration Day

On Friday, September 29th 1939, every householder in Britain had to fill in a form with details of all the people who lived on the premises. It was a form of census.

Everyone was then issued with an identity card (a vital document in wartime) and a ration book – even more vital if you wanted to keep the family fed.

Rationing didn't actually begin until January 1940. Some felt the delay was caused by the *Daily Express* newspaper, which led a vigorous 'Stop rationing!' campaign, describing the system as 'government control gone mad'.

Most people approved of the idea, though, because they could see that it was fair.

WHALE MEAT AGAIN

Trust the British to make a joke of it: one of the most popular hits of the war years was Vera Lynn's 'We'll Meet Again', and in no time at all the ration-weary public had changed the words to reflect their sorry plight.

Yes, for them it was 'whale meat again', although you get the impression that nobody happily tucked into it more than once.

But as your favourite food disappeared from the shelves, you had to turn to the available substitutes or go hungry.

Imperial measurements

You'll find second world war recipes scattered throughout this book, so you need to know about 'imperial' measurements such as pounds and ounces. Back in the war years kilos and grammes were 'foreign' weights, and some older people today still find it hard to come to terms with the metric system – however simple it may seem to you.

Here's a rough-and-ready check-list:

1oz (ounce) = 25gm
1lb (pound or 16 ounces) = 450gm
1 fluid ounce = 25ml
1 pint = 450ml

And while we're at it, here are a few length conversions, too:

1 inch = 2.5cm
1ft (foot or 12 inches) = 0.3 metres
1 yard (three feet) = 0.9m
1 mile (1760 yards) = 1.6km

Not surprisingly, mothers sometimes wouldn't tell their children what they were eating until the meal was over.

Here are a few of the novelties that the British found on their plates:

- **Whale meat.** 'Best left swimming in the sea,' was a common reaction. It was a tough meat and, naturally, it had a fishy flavour.
- **Snoek.** Pronounced 'snook' to rhyme with 'book', this was canned fish (barracouta) imported from South Africa. Everyone seems to have hated it.
- **Horse meat.** This had previously been fed only to dogs, so butchers had to put 'fit for human consumption' notices on their counters.
- **Offal.** Animals' innards such as liver, kidneys and tripe. They can be part of a very tasty hotpot, but the very idea makes some people squirm.
- **Sheep's head.** No, you didn't eat the head itself, but a flavoursome dinner could be made by putting one in a pot with vegetables, so that you had – as one wartime child later remembered it – 'the teeth staring out from the stew mixed with all potatoes and carrots and dumplings'. Lovely!

- **Spam.** Largely made of pork, this arrived from the USA in tins. Many people found it lip-smacking – and you can still buy it today.
- **Dried egg powder.** Fine in a cake, but horrible in an omelette.
- **Pom.** Powdered spuds, mixed with water to make mashed potato.
- **Saccharine tablets.** An intensely sweet substitute for sugar.
- **Dried milk powder.**

Dripping (the fat from roast beef) was used as a substitute for butter: spread on toast, it was regarded by many as a delicious treat.

Chewing on wood

Sweets were very hard to come by. They went 'on the ration' in July 1942 and didn't come off it for more than ten years. A typical allowance – it varied – was a meagre 12oz (350gm) every four weeks, so children had to be thankful for what they could get.

One advantage of so-called 'Spanish wood' was that it lasted you a long time.

It was a stick of dried liquorice root, and the experience of eating it was rather like sinking your teeth into a slightly flavoured pencil.

Some children turned in desperation to Horlicks tablets, which weren't on the ration – and certainly weren't sweet in the slightest – and cough drops. *Ugh!*

Others would shake together cocoa and any sugar they could scrounge and call it 'chocolate mixture'.

Meanwhile, in Holland...

Britain wasn't the only country to suffer food shortages during the war.

Throughout what was known as 'the hunger winter' Dutch people were reduced to eating the tulip bulbs for which their country is famous.

These were roasted on stoves and turned out to be tasty enough. The trouble was that they gave people a nasty dose of indigestion.

All right for some

However fair the government tried to be, the fact is people in the countryside generally had a better way of life. Not only were they not being bombed, but they had a greater choice of food.

Pheasant and other game weren't rationed, which meant that a wealthy landowner could keep his larder well stocked. The salmon in his streams were off-ration, too, along with all the other bounty of his estate – eggs, milk, butter, bacon and so on.

Ordinary people in rural areas were often better off, even if they didn't farm the land themselves. They had more room to keep livestock and to grow extra vegetables – and if they weren't averse to a bit of poaching, they might add a rabbit or a pheasant to the evening stew as well.

Soon greengrocers from the towns who had sufficient petrol coupons (*see page 105*) were driving their lorries out into the country to buy vegetables direct from the growers there.

Lord Portly was furious that there were no quail's eggs for supper.

Eating out

Another way of bypassing the rationing problem was to eat away from home, whether at school, in an industrial canteen or (if you could afford it) at a posh restaurant.

You can imagine, though, that people who didn't have much to eat and whose houses were being blown up around their ears weren't amused to see 'toffs' enjoying the high

What wasn't rationed

Among the foodstuffs never rationed during the war were:

- **Bread.** There was only the National Loaf, made of wholemeal flour: most people preferred the old, less healthy white variety.
- **Vegetables.** Often in short supply.
- **Fruit.** Even more scarce.
- **Fish and chips.**
- **Beer**

life while everyone else was suffering, and there was an outcry against it.

The government quickly acted to head off this resentment. They prevented restaurants from charging more than 5s a meal (still a large amount in those days) and from serving both meat and fish dishes in one meal.

But not all restaurants were what would have been called 'swanky'. Local authorities ran so-called British Restaurants, often in schools and church halls, with a three-course meal costing only 9d.

Open to everyone, they attracted queues of people for their basic British fare of bangers and mash and comforting, stodgy puddings.

This was also the heyday of the nationwide Lyons' tea shops and corner houses, with their uniformed waitresses known as Nippies.

These were a little more expensive (1/6 for a three-course meal and a coffee), but they became popular meeting places for a broad cross-section of the public.

Woolton pie

Ingredients:

- 1lb each of diced potatoes, cauliflower, swedes and carrots
- three or four spring onions
- one teaspoonful of vegetable extract
- 1oz of oatmeal or rolled oats

Method:

- Dice and cook the potatoes, cauliflower, swedes and carrots in boiling salted water.
- Strain, but keep three-quarters of a pint of the vegetable water.
- Arrange the vegetables in a large pie dish or casserole. Add the vegetable extract and the rolled oats or oatmeal to the vegetable liquid.
- Cook until thickened and pour over the vegetables.
- Cover with potato pastry: take 4oz self-raising flour with a pinch of salt; rub in 1 to 2oz of fat; add 4oz of smooth mashed potato; use a little water to bind; and roll out as for ordinary short-crust pastry.

Lord Woolton to the rescue

The first foodstuffs to be rationed, on January 8th, 1940, were bacon, butter and sugar, and the list was steadily expanded over the following months and years.

By the end of the war it included all meat, tea, margarine, jam, cheese, eggs, rice, dried fruit, tinned tomatoes, peas, sweets, chocolate and biscuits.

Sausages weren't rationed, but you didn't always know what the butcher had put in them. (Yes, it could be whale meat!)

Lord Woolton, the Minister for Food, realised that the nation's health could suffer drastically if people failed to feed themselves properly, so he began a vigorous campaign aimed at the nation's cooks.

He gathered around him a team of nutritonists and home economists – one of the most famous being Marguerite Patten, whose version of the meatless 'ration-book recipe' in his honour appears on the opposite page.

The ministry produced recipe books whose offerings sounded less than appetising:

- **vinegar cake**
- **fish-and-cabbage-spread sandwiches**
- **eggless fruit cake**
- **pilchard tart**
- **crumb fudge**

They spread their message on a popular BBC 'wireless' programme called The Kitchen Front – the idea being that the nation's cooks were playing every bit as vital a role in the war effort as the soldiers firing bullets on the other front (the so-called Front Line).

Potato Pete and Doctor Carrot

Potatoes and carrots were plentiful, and they were each given a cartoon character to promote them.

Potato Pete, a cheery chappy in knee-length boots with a tiny hat perched on his head, had his own recipe book which included such delightful offerings as potato bread, potatoes on toast, champ (mashed potatoes with cabbage), potato drop scones and potato sandwich spread.

How much each?

Although the amount varied, here's a typical ration for one adult per week:

Butter: 50g (2oz)
Bacon and ham: 100g (4oz)
Margarine: 100g (4oz)
Sugar: 225g (8oz)
Meat: To the value of 1s 2d.
Milk: 3 pints.
Cheese: 2oz (50g)
Eggs: 1 fresh egg a week.
Tea: 50g (2oz)
Jam: 450g (1lb) every two months.
Dried eggs 1 packet every four weeks.
Sweets: 350g (12oz) every four weeks.

In addition, everyone was allowed 16 points each month to use as they wished.

There were also special allowances for pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers (extra milk and vitamins); children under 5 (seven pints of free or subsidised milk); and, after 1942, all children (orange juice and cod-liver oil).

'Doctors advise each of us to eat at least 12oz, and if possible 1lb of potatoes each day,' the introduction runs. 'Potatoes help save both fat and flour in pastries, puddings and cakes.'

You were supposed not only to cook potatoes with the skins on (of course), but to eat the leafy tops of turnips and carrots as well.

Unfortunately Pete and his ministry friends were responsible for some pretty dire versions of familiar nursery rhymes, such as:

Jack Spratt could eat no fat
His wife could eat no lean;
So they both ate potatoes
And scraped their platters clean.

'Simple but better fare is the aim of the new cookery,' wrote the compiler of a *Daily Telegraph* cookery book. One of her recipes is reproduced on the facing page.

'New times necessitate new cookery. The old cookery books have become out of date for application to the tables, larders and store-cupboards of a changing world.'

Baked Potato Pudding

Ingredients:

- ½lb smoothly mashed potato
- 1½oz caster sugar
- 2oz currants
- 2oz margarine
- lemon substitute equivalent to 1 lemon
- 1 egg
- milk

Method:

- Cream fat and sugar.
- Mix in mashed potato with well-beaten egg and sufficient milk to make a soft mixture.
- Add lemon substitute (such as apple peel) and currants.
- Mix thoroughly and bake in greased pie dish in moderate oven for 45 minutes.

Everyone knew what that meant: create weird concoctions from whatever ingredients you could conceivably mix together to make something slightly recognisable from the period before the war!

Doctor Carrot was every bit as active as Pete, but he went one better by having some family members invented by the famous American animator Walt Disney. These were Pop Carrot, Clara Carrot and Carroty George.

The official line was that 'carrots keep you healthy and help you see in the blackout'.

True? Well, they contain vitamin A, and that's good for your eyes and skin, but munch too many of them and you'll end up looking the colour of a carrot yourself.

Some people later claimed the 'seeing in the dark' myth was a government ploy to hide the secret of British radar from the Germans. Our flying ace 'Cat's Eyes Cunningham' targeted enemy aircraft with the aid of radar beams, but it was useful to put his deadly aim down to a diet of carrots.

Folk often wondered, 'If he's so good for your eyesight, why does he wear glasses?'

Ten things to make with carrots

- **Carrolade.** A drink of carrot juice and grated swede squeezed through a piece of muslin. (Try this one at home only if you're very brave.)
- **Carrot cakes.** Some mistake, surely. These are delicious!
- **Carrot croquettes.**
- **Carrot fudge.**
- **Carrot jam.**
- **Carrot pudding.**
- **Curried carrots.**
- **Mock apricot tarts.**
- **Potato and carrot pancakes.**
- **Toffee carrots.**

Whale meat again

Once regarded as suitable only for animal feed, the humble carrot had become the most common ingredient in British cookery and was being grown in huge quantities.

Indeed, so successful was the government's drive for extra production that by the beginning of 1942 there was a glut of them – about 100,000 tons more than were needed. What on earth could be done with so many surplus carrots?

Meanwhile, in America...

Chewing gum became an official 'war material', thanks to the advertising skill of a leading maker of the stuff, Philip K. Wrigley.

He persuaded the US authorities that it relieved soldiers' tension, slaked their thirst and even cleaned their teeth – and he was asked by the army to supply a stick of gum for every pack of their combat rations.

American soldiers (GIs) in Britain became used to hopeful children calling out to them, 'Got any gum, chum?'

Yes, you've guessed it: they were used as animal feed as before! They were an excellent food for dairy cows and horses, and they helped fatten up pigs and bullocks.

There was a problem, though. Crooked dealers might sell them to shops and restaurants, making an illegal profit, so the government sprayed the surplus carrots with a (harmless) violet dye.

Poster power

'As many a wise mother knows,' declared an official cookery leaflet, 'the child who eats raw carrot freely is most unlikely to have a craving for sweets.'

That was the kind of half-truth put about by the government during the war. (After all, you might like raw carrots *and* go mad for a bar of chocolate, mightn't you?)

It reinforced simple messages like this with a vast array of colourful posters, some of them designed by famous artists who had been drafted in to help the war effort.

Preventing waste was a theme of several of them:

- **Waste not, want not.**
- **A clear plate means a clear conscience.**
- **Food is a munition of war – don't waste it.**
- **Better pot-luck with Churchill today than humble pie under Hitler tomorrow: Don't waste food!**

As the first organisation in the world to provide advice on healthy eating, the Ministry of Food naturally had plenty of posters to promote that, too.

And here's the amazing thing: after all those years of deprivation and of making do with what little they could get, the British people were in general more healthy at the end of the war than their descendants (us) are today.

Luckily the moral of this isn't that we should eat whale meat and drink Carrolade (phew!) but that as a nation we ought to consume less meat and fat and more fruit and vegetables.

Potato Pete was right after all . . .

first catch your squirrel

The BBC's Home Service programme 'The Kitchen Front' encouraged listeners to send in ideas for economy dishes.

Pigs' brains and cows' udders were suggested as useful ingredients (let us know how you get on with them), while other recipes included:

- **Crow pie**
- **Rosehip chutney**
- **Sheep's head broth**
- **Squirrel tail soup**

Dig for Victory

The solution to the shortages problem was obvious – we should grow more ourselves. And that's what we did, very quickly and on an enormous scale.

Farmers were paid to cultivate much more of their land (they'd have it taken over, or 'requisitioned', if they didn't), and this often meant taking the plough to poor soil and hilly areas that hadn't been regarded as suitable before. Many of them worked through the night at it.

The government aimed to have an extra 1,700,000 acres (688,000 hectares, or the equivalent of about a million football pitches) ready for production by harvest time 1940. Incredibly, they reached their target in April, several months ahead of schedule.

The 'Plough Now' campaign was nationwide. Every county appointed a War Agricultural (War Ag) Committee tasked with finding as much spare land as it could to grow vegetables and cereals.

Gourmet chefs of the future would probably disagree.

But the job of feeding the nation wasn't to be left to the professionals – the farmers. There was a vital role for amateurs to play, too.

'We want not only the big man with the plough,' said the Minister for Agriculture, Rob Hudson, in October 1939, 'but the little man with the spade to get busy this autumn. Let *Dig for Victory* be the motto of everyone with a garden.'

So it was that lawns and flower beds all over the country were swiftly turned into miniature allotments, and that many men, women and children who had never previously handled a trowel or a hoe found themselves sowing seeds and harvesting crops.

Gardens made obvious plots, but many other areas were dug up at the same time:

- **tennis courts and golf courses**
- **parks and recreation grounds**
- **railway embankments**
- **seaside promenades**
- **bombsites**
- **the Tower of London moat**

In Dover, after a heavy air raid during which several houses had been destroyed in a single street, looters systematically picked their way through them all, carrying away everything they could find.

'Carpets have been stripped from the floors,' a local chief inspector reported. 'Stair carpets have been removed – they have even taken away heavy mangles, bedsteads and complete suites of furniture.'

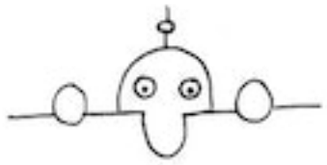
Meanwhile in Russia...

People can get used to shortages of most things, but if they have an addiction they will often pay excessive amounts to feed their habit. Tobacco was rationed in Russia during the war, and black marketeers immediately moved in to make a killing.

Amazingly, they didn't need to sell the tobacco in order to cash in. They would stand on street corners with lit cigarettes and charge passers-by two roubles for every puff they took.

Whatever you do, try not to think about the health implications!

Also in Kent, a group of army deserters went on a rampage of looting and were given sentences ranging from five years in gaol to eight years hard labour.



Guns, too

More worrying were the frequent thefts of weapons and ammunition from Home Guard armaments stores. In March 1943 three 17-year-olds youths held up the cashier at the Ambassador cinema in Hayes, London, with three loaded sten-guns that had been stolen from the local Home Guard store. After they were arrested they admitted that they had taken part in 43 other raids in London.

There were many cases of large-scale theft and fraud. Gangs, often with inside help, would raid depots supplying military canteens and shops (belonging to the NAAFI, or Navy, Army and Air Force Institute) and would sell the food and other stolen goods on the black market. It was against the law to buy rationed

goods without coupons, but the temptation was too great for many people. They happily paid up.

The open air market in Romford, Essex, was notorious for its black market trade. 'Tic tac men' (just like those on race courses) would send hand signals to one another to warn of a police raid.

Here food would openly be sold without coupons, while new clothes would be marked 'second-hand' or 'shop-soiled', which allowed them to be traded without coupons as long as they cost no more than £2.12s.

Undercover inspectors had just begun to get control of the situation when 100,000 ration books (worth more than £500,000) were stolen from the local Ministry of Food offices. These very soon appeared at the market in the hands of customers now able to buy 'legally'.

"And these would really give your vehicle a bit of class."

Some big names caught in the net

It wasn't only the man or woman in the street who were caught breaking the law in wartime. Some well-known figures appeared in court:

- **Noel Coward.** The famous dramatist, song writer and entertainer was fined for committing a minor currency offence, and Winston Churchill denied him a knighthood because of it. (It came his way years later.)

- **Ivor Novello.** The famous composer and actor was sent to prison for eight weeks after fraudulently obtaining petrol for his Rolls-Royce. Apparently it was supplied to him by a female admirer, who got it from her boss.

- **Major-General Sir Percy Laurie.** The Provost Marshal (the officer in charge of the military police) was found guilty of illegally possessing a second ration book. He told the court he thought he was entitled to have one for Great Britain and another while abroad.

- **Sir William Jowitt.** The solicitor general (one of the leading law officers in the land) appeared in court for supplying animal food without coupons to his farm in Kent. He said that he had 'not the smallest knowledge' that rules were being broken – and as he was seen as someone of 'the highest respectability', the prosecution decided not to ask for a conviction. Lucky man!

A heavy hand

While few people condoned this sort of thing (not publicly, anyway), there was a growing feeling that the authorities were going 'over the top' – bringing charges against people who had either committed a minor infringement of the law or had simply made a mistake. There seemed to be no common sense.

Someone, for instance, was given a month in prison for allowing light to escape from behind a curtain, while a rescue worker who, at the end of an exhausting day, took a swig from a near-empty bottle of gin he had picked up from the wreckage of a bombed house, found himself in court accused of looting, just as if he had loaded the victims' furniture into a van.

Here are a few other 'crimes' for which people were fined:

- **Taking vegetables from a waste bin.**
- **Stealing an onion from an allotment.**
- **Wasting electricity by leaving a light on.**
- **Picking apples from a tree.**

We've heard the story of the doctor who sold portions of an 'illegal' pig to his patients (*see page 75*), and this kind of petty crime – as it had now become – was common enough, however guilty people sometimes felt about it.

Here are a few of the countless stories told of buying on the black market:

• The father who came home with his face bloody after being caught out in a bombing raid, but who hadn't been to the hospital because he feared being given a fine: he'd bought two eggs illegally for his children and the smashed evidence lay in his soggy pocket.

• The woman who was given black market coupons and then had her handbag stolen: she was terrified that the police would find it with the coupons inside, but luckily the thief took the coupons before discarding the bag.

• The mother and daughter who bought a piglet at a farm and took it home on a bus wrapped in a shawl, only for a police officer to sit down on the next seat: it was the most uncomfortable journey of their lives.

Insider dealing

When the food control officer in Brighton discovered that 80,000 ration books had been stolen from the local food office based in the Royal Pavilion, the police decided to use a plain clothes officer to go 'under cover' and buy some.

This proved successful, and the gang was soon caught. Imagine the shock, however, when it emerged that their ring-leader was the very enforcement officer at the Pavilion who had first reported the theft. She was imprisoned for three years.

Brighton Royal Pavilion

Meanwhile, in Poland...

Hitler had spoken of his desire to kill 'without pity or mercy, all men, women and children of Polish descent or language,' and the Polish people were reduced to effective slavery after the German invasion in 1939. Six million died, half of them Polish Jews, who were denied all human rights and sent to the death camps.

Although the country was agriculturally rich, severe rationing was introduced so that the occupying army ate well while those labourers it needed to work in the mines and the factories were fed just enough to survive. Nobody else mattered.

In the cities millions of people faced starvation – and it was the black market which saved them. Peasant growers or their 'middle men' travelled for many miles under cover of darkness (on foot or by horse and cart) in the knowledge that they were likely to be shot on the spot if caught breaking the regulations.

Other black marketeers arrived by train, carrying seemingly innocent brief cases packed with red meat.

Their motives were no doubt mixed. Some of them made huge profits, taking advantage of their customers' desperation. Without them, though, the appalling suffering in the cities would have been even worse than it was.

• The butcher's boy who would regularly take a disguised ham to the baker and bring home 'indigestion powder' – highly valued sugar.

• The little girl who watched as a local man who sold black market silk underwear from a suitcase was chased by the police: her respectable grandma hid the case 'because everyone stuck together in those days'.

• The blameless auntie who, with a finger to her lips, produced a tin of clotted cream from under the dustbin after the local dairyman had delivered the milk. In these circumstances questions simply weren't asked.

All of these people were taking a risk, because the law was often strictly enforced. Parliament passed legislation which enabled the courts to impose fines of up to £500, with or without two years' imprisonment, plus three times the sum involved.

Sneaks and snoopers

Meanwhile, at the Odeon Theatre in Streatham, Surrey, the manageress and two of her waitresses were fined for 'aiding and abetting' the serving of both meat and fish to a customer.

And who was the customer? Why, an assistant enforcement officer, who knew very well when he ordered the food that he was encouraging staff to break the law!

Here was a nasty side to law enforcement. It was bad enough that members of the public would sometimes inform the authorities if they knew of a trader who was bending the rules. People didn't like sneaks.

But now it became obvious that the authorities were acting as 'agents provocateurs' – that is, pretending to be genuine customers in order to provoke shopkeepers and restaurateurs into wrong-doing. That kind of snooping was widely condemned in the newspapers.

How did they go about it?

In December 1940, Stepney council in the East End of London employed a woman to visit butchers' shops and try to buy meat without coupons. Three of them in a single road found themselves heavily fined for it – which no doubt acted as a warning to others.

That was straightforward. A much more cunning approach was used in the London borough of Hendon. This involved a team of women who hoped to trick shop assistants into selling them goods without coupons.
The 'customer' would hand over her ration book and ask for two ounces of tea. Just as the shop assistant had almost finished serving her she would change her mind and ask for four ounces. If the assistant forgot to take out a second two-ounce coupon she would be charged with breaking the rationing restrictions.

In no time at all some 59 Hendon shopkeepers had been successfully prosecuted for the offence.

Caught in the act

From *The East Grinstead Observer*,
28th August, 1943:

"A well-known East Grinstead resident, Bernard Richardson, of Half-Way House, North End, and proprietor of the Elite Cafe, London Road, has been fined £5 with £10 guineas costs, for supplying false figures to the Ministry of Food and gaining more food points than he was entitled to.

William Harry Leppard of 47 Cantelupe Road, East Grinstead, said he was employed from February 1st to 6th by Mr. Greatorex, the East Grinstead Food Control Officer, to keep watch on the Elite Cafe and enter in a book the number of customers.

On February 1st there were 153, 2nd there were 161, 3rd there were 157, 4th there were 155, 5th there were 141 and on the 6th there were 126.

Miss Molly Fry of the East Grinstead Food Office estimated that the defendant was only entitled to 828 points, whereas on the number of meals he is purported to have served the Food Office issued him with 2,150 points.

The magistrate, Louisa Martindale, fined Bernard Richardson £5 with £10 guineas costs."

There were in all some 900 inspectors employed by the Ministry of Food. They quickly discovered that farmers and smallholders were the main source of producing food for the black market, but they seem to have made corner shop retailers their main target.

The national figures for successful prosecutions under the Food Control Order are remarkable. There were over 4,000 in the space of just two months during 1941.

Dying for a drink

Strong alcohol was in short supply during the war, and gangs made illegal 'hooch' using pure alcohol, industrial alcohol or methylated spirits mixed with flavours such as juniper and almond essences to make them palatable.

This stuff could prove lethal, and many victims were soldiers. The commanders of American camps in Britain issued their men with a free bottle of whisky or gin when they went on leave, just to keep them off the hooch.

Reluctant conscripts

Not everyone was keen to be 'called up' to serve his king and country. Indeed, many did everything they could to avoid it.

You had to be fit enough to serve in the forces, and one escape route was to persuade your doctor or your employer to issue you with a false certificate which said you had a disability of some sort.

Another scam was to pay someone else to turn up for the medical in your place – that someone, of course, being quite obviously in the very worst of health.

"Er, it says here that you're a lumberjack, Mr Smith..."

Food shops weren't the only outlets to be targeted. The general secretary of the National Association of Outfitters was soon complaining that small traders had become 'the most persecuted class in the whole of the country'.

Or was the *government* the most persecuted of them all? The fact is that it faced skulduggery at every turn and had to be on its guard all the time. Here are a few examples...

Bogus evacuees

At the outbreak of war it was decided that families in the countryside should be forced to take in evacuee children from the towns and cities. They would be given money to look after them – and this was, of course, another opportunity for the criminal fraternity.

Some hosts continued to claim their allowances long after the children had returned home. Even worse was the behaviour of people who stole blank billeting forms, invented names and drew allowances for completely fictitious evacuees.

Bombed out – 19 times!

The authorities came to the rescue of people who had been bombed out of their houses, giving them compensation to buy new things.

Unfortunately this was a great tempation to dishonest people, who realised that the national assistance office was overwhelmed with claims and therefore found it hard to check on all those queuing for help.

One man who WAS caught perpetrating what was known as 'the bomb lark' had claimed to have been made homeless 19 times in five months. He was jailed for three years.

Ghostly workers

One of the worst examples of large-scale fraud during the war involved a Liverpool ship repairer, Frederick Porter, who invented workers on his payroll so that he could claim money for their supposed work on non-existent jobs.

The scam made millions of pounds in today's values, the cash being stashed away in bank vaults all around the Lake District. When it was exposed a Liverpool councillor involved it in was sent to prison for nine years, a naval officer was sentenced to three years – and Frederick Porter shot himself.

An end at *last*?

There was such national rejoicing at the end of the war that the government actually made 'red, white and blue bunting available without use of coupons for one month'.

What generosity! And surely a dismantling of the tedious restrictions people had for so long endured must now follow?

Alas, no. There was a long, hard slog ahead.

After the War was Over

To everyone's relief the war ended in 1945, but the hardship was far from over. Bread and flour, which had never been restricted during the war, were put on the ration in July 1946.

There can have been no more depressing confirmation of something the British people had already come to realise – that military victory, however sweet it tasted at the time, had solved nothing economically.

The fallen

The immediate post-war world was a kind of wasteland, with an estimated 60 million people having been killed around the globe – two thirds of them civilians.

Arguing about the accuracy of the figures is not only pointless but distasteful. Some countries which registered smaller totals of deaths still lost far greater proportions of their populations (in Poland's case about 16 per cent).

Apart from these combined military and civilian deaths, many people died from famine and disease attributable to the war.

Soviet Union	27,000,000
China	12,000,000
Germany	8,000,000
Poland	6,000,000
Japan	2,500,000
Yugoslavia	1,700,000
Romania	1,000,000
France	800,000
Hungary	750,000
Austria	500,000
Greece	500,000
Italy	400,000
Czechoslovakia	400,000
United Kingdom	388,000
USA	300,000
Holland	250,000

The excitements, horrors and do-or-die sentiments of the war had gone, and in their place were only weariness, drabness and the same tedious, seemingly endless shortages. How could it be otherwise? All over the world, war-weary countries were attempting to rebuild their economies at a time of poor wheat harvests and serious shortages of butter, margarine and cooking fats.

The new bread rationing was complicated (it included cakes, buns and scones, too), but it meant that the ordinary 'man in the street' could expect just six slices a day. If that seems quite a bit more than you would expect to eat yourself, don't forget that there wasn't much else to take its place.

Bolshie Britain

How did people react? The Minister for Food, John Strachey, confidently told the House of Commons that 'if we read some of the accounts of the way the American public has been behaving in the last few weeks we should be glad that the government is going to even out distribution by rationing.

'We shall not have bodyguards round bakers' vans to prevent attacks from angry housewives. We shall manage things, we may hope, more decently and fairly.'

But something had changed in the public mood. The great war hero Winston Churchill had just lost the first post-war general election to Clement Attlee's Labour Party, partly because soldiers returning from the Front decided that those who had fought for their country should have more of a say in how it should be run. And the women, many of whom had done 'men's work' during the war, had a new-found confidence, too.

Revolting housewives

A Pathé newsreel about the introduction of bread rationing showed a Mrs Hilda Davis calling on 'an army of indignant housewives' to sign a petition against it, while 'a vicar's wife and food crusader', Mrs Lovelock, told a meeting of the British Housewives League that 'we, the housewives of Great Britain are in open revolt' and that 'the League will not stand for it'.

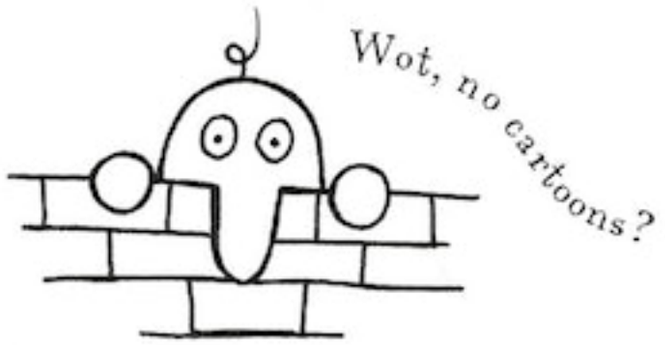
Mickey Mouse TV

Television closed down on 1st September 1939 after the broadcast of a Mickey Mouse film, 'Mickey's Gala Premiere'. When it started up again on 7th June 1946 the BBC chose to begin with the very same film – almost as if nothing had happened in the meantime!

There were only about 20,000 TV sets in those days, and you probably wouldn't have enjoyed a great many of the programmes, which were pretty 'worthy' overall.

Many echoed the much more popular radio programmes of the time, although the attempt to put on a version of 'How to Furnish a Flat' fell through, according to a BBC committee, 'owing to unavailabity of the furniture'.

This post-war austerity extended to the best-loved children's programme of the period, 'Muffin the Mule'. He was a puppet – and you could see the strings moving!



Nothing could be done about it, of course, and potato rationing (also unheard of during the war) was imposed during the following year. Things had actually got worse.

With the economy in a mess, unemployment rose from 400,000 to all of 1,750,000 in 1948. The government announced a freeze on wages ('If a lot of people want a larger slice they can only get it by taking it from others,' the chancellor the exchequer explained), and sport was banned during the week to prevent workers taking time off to watch it.

American aid

Help came (twice) from across the Atlantic. Between 1941 and 1945 the United States had given Britain war material worth a staggering $21 billion in a system known as lend-lease (we paid back the last instalment as recently as December 2006).

Now, between 1948 and 1951, the so-called Marshall Plan provided another huge sum to rejuvenate the economies of Europe. Soon we would turn the corner...

A royal wedding

The Roman satirist Juvenal said the only two things the public really wanted were 'bread and circuses'. Well, the British would have to wait until 1948 for unrationed bread, but they enjoyed the equivalent of a circus with the wedding of Princess Elizabeth (England's current queen) to Philip Mountbatten (now known as Prince Philip) in November, 1947. It was wonderful to have all this glorious razzmatazz in a time of austerity (including the famous golden coach), although there were a few 'humble' touches to show that the couple were in touch with reality:

- The government allowed the Princess 200 extra clothing coupons towards her trousseau (bridal outfit).
- The two royal prayer kneelers, covered in rose pink silk, were made from orange boxes and date-stamped 1946.
- Because of rationing, ingredients for the wedding cake were gifts sent from overseas.
- Other gifts from the public included a hand-knitted cardigan, two pairs of bed socks and a hand-knitted tea cosy.

Thank goodness for make do and mend!

One sad note was that Prince Philip's sisters weren't invited to the wedding. They were all married to Germans, and it was regarded as a bit too soon after the war for that. They did get to come, though, to the next grand occasion in London, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953.

Not to be sniffed at

Royal souvenirs were a novelty in 1947, and Buckingham Palace wasn't amused by some of the tat on sale to celebrate the royal wedding.

A plastic flag was said to amount 'almost to a caricature' (the manufacturers were advised to make the portraits on the flag more lifelike), while the uses to which a commemorative handkerchief might be put gave Palace staff the shudders.

The Home Office, however, ruled that the hankies were acceptable as buyers were unlikely to blow their noses on them.

An end to rationing

Most people who lived through those years regard the 1950s as a dismal, low-key decade lacking in colour, drive and self-confidence.

Things did improve, but very slowly (even in the early 1960s there were undeveloped bomb sites in London and other cities) and rationing went away only on 4th July, 1954 – by which time people had put up with nearly fifteen years of it.

Meat was the last foodstuff to be made freely available. Members of the London Housewives' Association held a special ceremony in Trafalgar Square, and Geoffrey Lloyd, the minister of fuel and power, burned a large replica of a ration book at an open meeting in his constituency.

Good riddance!

The festival of Britain

Austerity didn't disappear overnight, as we've seen, but the Festival of Britain, in the summer of 1951, was designed to mark a new era.

'The Festival is the British showing themselves to themselves – and the world,' said Herbert Morrison, the Labour MP who had been a major figure in its creation.

A new concert hall, the Royal Festival Hall, was built on the south bank of the Thames, while close to it were two structures which were designed to be only temporary – the Dome of Discovery and the slender, cigar-shaped Skylon.

The things Britain clearly wished to celebrate were its industry, science, landscape and character, although there was also a large funfair on the other side of the river in Battersea Park.

By the end of September more than eight million people had visited the Festival.

NEVER AGAIN?

Some of the lessons older people try to draw from their experience of the war years are bound to go in one of your headphoned ears and out of the other faster than a shard of shrapnel in an air raid:

- How can you leave that piece of potato skin/cabbage stalk/gristle on your plate when millions are starving?
- If you saved those bits of soap you've just thrown away you could make a new bar.
- In my day we'd make a pair of trousers last for years.
- You've left the bathroom light on yet again!
- Put a jumper on and you won't need to turn the central heating up.

In a time of plenty those penny-pinching ideas simply sound old-fashioned, and we're inclined to tell ourselves that we're too busy to give them much thought.

But wait a moment! Hard times may well be around the corner – and rationing is once again on the agenda.

Carbon footprints

In 2008 a House of Commons select committee proposed that every adult in Britin should be issued with an energy trading 'credit card'.

This would measure each individual's energy usage – or carbon footprint – whether at home or travelling. In short, how much you used would be capped (or rationed). You'd have to choose between, say, going on holiday or having the central heating on more often.

There would be a kind of market place, so that frugal people could be rewarded financially.

A report called 'A Rough Guide to Individual Carbon Trading' a couple of years earlier reached similar conclusions, and its authors said 'We could not find or imagine analogues in other fields of human activity for individual carbon trading beyond rationing during and after World War 2.'

The Environment Minister, Hilary Benn, turned the idea down because of its cost, but added that it was 'ahead of its time'. In other words: watch this space!

Martin's carbon footprint made him few friends.

The most attractive way of conserving precious energy is to offer incentives rather than to impose restrictions, and this is already happening in several areas. For example:

- **Special lanes on busy roads for drivers carrying passengers rather than travelling alone.**
- **Supermarket rewards for customers who bring their own bags with them to avoid using plastic carriers.**
- **Grants for those who install wind turbines on their land or who insulate their lofts.**

As for low-energy light bulbs, they're good for the planet, but as they flicker slowly into life nothing smacks more of wartime austerity!

Nor any drop to drink

These are useful initiatives, as are recycling schemes, 'eco cycles' on washing machines and the use of bio fuels, but something more drastic will be called for if the country runs short of water, as many of the experts fear.

What lessons would the government take from second world war rationing then?

First, the system it introduced would have to be regarded as fair – as was mainly so during the war.

Secondly it would have to be easy to manage, without the ability for the unscrupulous to exploit it, but as we've seen this is easier said than done.

Thirdly, the government would need to show more trust in the public than it was inclined to do before, with its intrusive snooping to catch out ordinary people breaking the law.

This may all be some way off, but one thing seems very likely: rationing may not follow the pattern experienced between 1940 and 1954, but in one form or another it will indeed eventually be with us again.

Woolton Pie, anyone?

GLOSSARY

Allied forces Men and women fighting on the side of the Allies, the group of countries opposed to Adolf Hitler's campaign of invasion. The Allies included the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the U.S.S.R along with many others.

Anderson shelter A small steel hut built to protect people from bomb blasts during the Blitz.

anthracite A dense, hard type of coal.

austerity A period in which a government is forced to drastically reduce its spending, leading to hard times for the people.

blackout A state in which lights had to be turned off or hidden behind thick blackout curtains in order to avoid drawing attention from enemy bombers overhead.

The Blitz The period of sustained bombing of Britain by the German Luftwaffe between 7th September, 1940 and 10th May, 1941.

census An official record of demographic information about a population.

dripping An animal fat produced from the fatty or otherwise unusable parts of cow or pig carcasses.

E-boat A fast German boat which fired torpedoes.

isinglass jelly A type of jelly made from fish.

Luftwaffe The German air force.

NAAFI The Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes, set up to provide entertainment for and to sell goods to servicemen.

surgical lint A type of fabric used in surgical dressings.

tallboy A piece of furniture incorporating a double chest of drawers and a wardrobe on top.

teasel head The spiky top of a teasel plant.

U-boat A German submarine used during World War I or World War II.

utility clothing/furniture Simplified and cheap products sold by the government at a fixed price during rationing.

wireless Equipment which could receive radio signals. Short for 'wireless telegraphy'.

WLA The Women's Land Army, a civilian organisation of women working in agriculture, replacing men called up to the military. Commonly called 'land girls'.

Rationing Timeline

1939

September 3rd War is declared.
September 22nd Petrol is rationed.
September 29th National register is set up and identity cards are issued.

1940

January 8th Butter, sugar, bacon and ham are rationed.
February 12th Paper is rationed.
March 11th Meat is rationed.
April 3rd Lord Woolton is appointed minister of food.
May 5th Strike action is banned.
May 8th Tea, margarine and cooking fats are rationed; ban on icing of confectionery; restaurants not allowed to serve fish and meat courses in the same meal.
May 10th Winston Churchill becomes prime minister.
May 27th Butter rations are cut.

June 18th–25th 'The graveyard week' for children's comics.

July 11th Public appeal for aluminium, collected by the WVS (Women's Voluntary Service.

July 20th Buying and selling new cars is banned.

July 23rd Emergency budget imposes higher taxes on luxury goods.

November 9th First looting convictions at the Old Bailey.

December 3rd Extra rations of tea and sugar for Christmas.

1941

March 17th Jam, marmalade, treacle and syrup are rationed.

April 8th United States enters the war.

April 19th Essential Work Order for women.

May 5th Cheese is rationed.

June 1st Clothing is rationed; egg distribution is controlled.

July 4th Coal is rationed.

November Milk distribution is controlled.

December National Dried Milk and vitamin welfare scheme are introduced; new points scheme for food.

1942

January Rice and dried fruit are rationed; tea ration for under-5s is withdrawn.

February 9th Soap is rationed. Tinned tomatoes and peas are rationed.

February 11th New law means black marketeers face up to 14 years in prison; National Loaf replaces white bread.

February 17th Coal rationing is extended to all domestic fuels.

June 1st Fripperies are banned on clothing; American dried egg powder goes on sale.

June 3rd Government takes over the coal mines.

July 26th Sweets and chocolates are rationed.

August Biscuits are rationed. Utility furniture is introduced.

1943

March 7th Wings for Victory campaign launched.

July 29th Recruitment for women's services halted because more are needed for aircraft production.

September 24th Manpower crisis said to be looming.

October 29th Thames dockers on strike.

December 2nd Bevin Boys called up for the mines.

1944

February 1st Clothing restrictions lifted.

February 24th Miners are given a 4-year pay deal.

April 27th All foreign travel banned.

June 5 D-Day: Allied troops land in Normandy.

September 6th The blackout is relaxed.

September 17th 'Dim-out' replaces blackout.

October 8th New ministry of social insurance formed.

October 16th First British soldier demobilised.

November 20th Street lights turned on.

1945

April 24th 'Dim-out' abolished except in five coastal regions.

May 7th German High Command surrenders.

May 8th Victory in Europe Day.

June 13th New family allowances scheme announced.

July 5th General election held.

July 26th Election result declared: landslide victory for the Labour Party.

August 6th Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

August 9th Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

August 14th Japan surrenders.

August 17th Social reform programme announced by Labour, centred on NHS.

September 2nd Press censorship ends.

November 5th Dockers' strike ends.

1946

July 21st Bread and flour are rationed.

1947

November 8th Potatoes are rationed.
November 20th Wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip.

1948

July 25th End of bread and flour rationing. End of potato rationing.
December End of jam rationing.

1949

March 15th End of clothes rationing.

1950

May 19th End of rationing for canned and dried fruit, chocolate biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies and mincemeat.
May 26th End of petrol rationing.
September End of soap rationing.
October 3rd End of tea rationing.

1953

February End of sweets rationing.
March End of egg rationing.
April End of cream rationing.

June 2nd Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
September End of sugar rationing.

1954

May End of rationing of butter, cheese, margarine and cooking fats.
July 4th End of all rationing as meat becomes freely available in the shops.

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