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# The British Home Front 1939–45



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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to the civilians who manned the Home Front 1939–45, of whom the Office of Home Security statistics listed 146,777 men, women and children as casualties of war, and of this total, 60,595 as killed or died of wounds.

'It wasn't all doom and gloom – we had some fun times, too.'  
*Alma Bowron, London resident 1939–45*

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Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the colour plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the Publishers. All enquiries should be addressed to:

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COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

This notice – which does not, thankfully, apply to this work – was placed on the frontispiece of all books produced during wartime, in conformity with the strict regulations governing their production.

# THE BRITISH HOME FRONT 1939–45

## INTRODUCTION

IT IS DIFFICULT to give precise figures for the numbers of civilians who were injured or killed during the German offensive against the British Home Front, since government departments based their statistics on differing criteria. As an example, the Office of Home Security figures of 60,595 killed include all deaths resulting from bombing (51,509), V1 and V2 rockets (8,938), and artillery bombardment (148); but do not include about 1,200 Home Guard fatalities, nor merchant seamen who died ashore in Britain. The Registrar General's statistics included the latter two groups, as well as civilians killed at sea, and are therefore higher. (In all, nearly 32,000 British merchant seamen lost

their lives during the war.) Given an overall wartime total of about 398,000 killed and missing from the United Kingdom population of about 47.5 million, civilian deaths thus represented about 15 per cent of the whole.

Regardless of which statistics are quoted, it is apparent that the civilian population of Great Britain gave much in the war against Nazi Germany, and that this sacrifice has received less than its due recognition. This book, limited as it is by its size, aims to give a brief overview of some aspects of life in wartime Britain, and a summary of the main organizations that defended society from enemy action or were otherwise dedicated to war work.

In many British towns, faded EWS (emergency water supply) markings may still be seen on walls; air raid shelters still serve as school bicycle sheds, and Anderson shelters occasionally survive in allotment gardens – themselves a wartime expedient for food production. Most families will have older members who lived through the war years at least as children, many with vivid memories of life in Britain under attack. The more observant will notice that some older buildings still show signs of bomb damage caused by enemy action over 60 years ago; and for those who take the time to find them, few major cities are without memorials to their citizens killed by enemy action.

**Prior to the outbreak of war, a local Air Raid Precautions representative shows a family how to fit and wear their gas masks.**



## BRITAIN AT WAR

At 11am on the morning of Sunday 3 September 1939, people throughout Great Britain gathered silently around their wireless sets to listen to an announced broadcast by the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. A previous ultimatum by the British government, demanding an undertaking that German troops would withdraw from Poland, expired at 11am; and 15 minutes later the Prime Minister came on air. Sounding nervous and tired, Chamberlain stated: '... I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany'.

Many thought back to Chamberlain's claim to have achieved 'Peace for our time' on his return from the Munich conference the previous year. That meeting – between Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier of France and Mussolini of Italy – had taken place on 29 September 1938. It had allowed German territorial claims on Czechoslovakia, in the hope that peace in Europe could be bought at the price of sacrificing a small country far away, of which most Britons knew little. In no real position to go to war with Germany in 1938, the British government had adopted a stance of appeasement; but at least the Munich agreement earned Britain a respite, and allowed much to be achieved in preparing for war if it came.

Although not fully organized in September 1939, the nation certainly stood ready. The Civil Defence services had been prepared; gas masks and self-assembly air raid shelters had been issued; rationing of food and other vital resources, and evacuation of the vulnerable from centres of population, had been planned in detail. The military had seen rapid rearmament and a massive build-up of manpower.

Gas mask production had actually begun in 1937, and by the Munich crisis more than 38 million had already been distributed to local authorities, a further 35 million being issued directly to members of the public; in 1939 the Treasury was to authorize UK stocks of civilian respirators to be set at 57 million. From late 1939 the expensive 'gas

hood' units were issued for all children up to 2½ years old living in vulnerable areas; this 'baby bag' could also be used for children up to the age of 5 who would not wear a normal children's mask. For toddlers up to 4 years old a special red-faced 'Mickey Mouse' mask would also soon be available. (This actually looked nothing like Mickey, but had two goggling eye-pieces.)

By September 1939, 2 million sectional steel shelters ('Anderson shelters') had also been provided to those most vulnerable, with

orders for a total of 2,500,000. Named after the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, this was a corrugated iron 'shed' measuring 6ft 6in x 4ft 6in; it was provided free of cost to low-income families earning less than £250 per annum; others paid around £5 for it (a labourer's weekly wage then averaged £4 0s 7d – see panel on page 7). By mid-1940 over 2.25 million shelters had been supplied, although by the time that metal shortages brought an end to their production in April 1941 only 100,000 had been bought privately. The shelter was dug down into gardens, and could sleep up to six adults (a smaller and a larger pattern were also available). It provided adequate protection from blast, and – more importantly – kept individuals out of their homes during raids, when they would otherwise run a high risk of being buried or injured if the building were demolished. Many families would survive in their Anderson shelters while their homes were flattened. By the end of 1940 the metal frame 'Morrison shelter' (after Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Home Security) was being issued for erection inside vulnerable homes that had no garden and therefore nowhere to dig-in an Anderson shelter.

Local public shelters were built, and basements of public and commercial buildings, as well as church crypts, were converted for use as shelters. Access to many shelters required passes, in order to limit the number of occupants under necessary safety measures. Bunk tickets were available at around a shilling (5p), enabling a better night's sleep than that afforded by lying directly on the already overcrowded Underground station platforms. By 1942, 470,000 people would be sleeping in shelters each night, with another 140,000 taking refuge in the Underground system.

Within hours of the declaration of war, proclamations and call-ups were affecting the majority of the population. Doctors registered with the Ministry of Health were told to report for duty at major hospitals. Passport endorsements were cancelled and overseas movement restricted. Short-term prisoners, with less than three months to serve, were released from custody. Cinemas, theatres and other places of entertainment were closed until further notice, although they would be reopened only two weeks later – they were recognized as being valuable for morale, and as important channels for spreading public information and propaganda.

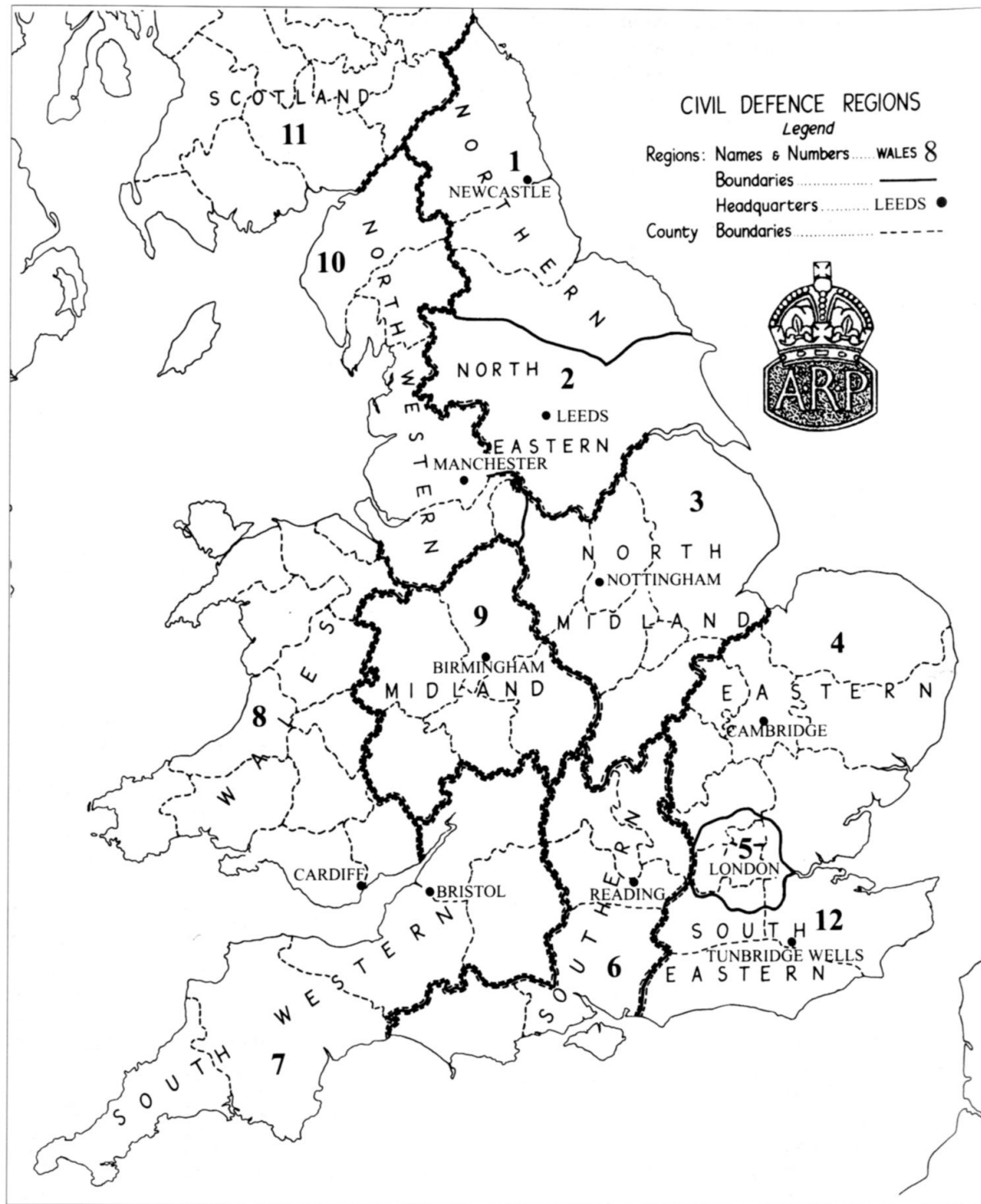


This comic postcard makes light of air raid shelters, but the public mood would change dramatically with the start of major air raids on cities on 28 August 1940. By the end of that year cumulative civilian casualties – just over 23,000 killed and 32,128 seriously injured – far exceeded those yet suffered by the armed forces.

A borough of Southport bus provides an ARP mobile First Aid Post, ingenious for its time. The bus carried folding sections that opened out into a large working and reception area.

ARP exercises, 1939/40: civilians emerge from a newly constructed public shelter in a London park. The initial anxiety following the declaration of war would soon wane, and during the 'Phoney War' of that winter city dwellers would grumble under emergency restrictions that seemed unnecessarily burdensome.





Mainland Great Britain was divided into 12 Civil Defence Regions, with manpower and assets provided as required depending on the local industrial or military targets. London was the smallest region, allowing a concentration of assets in the heavily bombed capital; Scotland was the largest and least targeted, since it was threatened only by the

four Luftwaffe twin-engined bomber Gruppen based in Scandinavia, which seldom ventured across the broad expanse of the North Sea, while 35 Gruppen were based in northern France and the Low Countries. The National Fire Service would be divided in a similar, although not geographically identical manner. (HMSO/Author's collection)

The public were rapidly educated in the realities of modern warfare. Gas and aerial bombs were the greatest threats, and information leaflets covering these and other aspects of Air Raid Precautions (ARP) were delivered to most households, while a miscellany of commercial ARP publications appeared in bookshops. Householders were advised to make a 'refuge room' in the home; cellars and basements, gas-proofed and protected from blast, were recommended. The refuge room was to contain materials for sealing cracks against gas, 'Durex ARP tape' being one of a number of products available commercially for this purpose. Tinned food, water both for drinking and fire-fighting, a lamp, pastimes such as books and games, a wireless, a torch, toilet articles, and spare clothing and blankets were to be kept in the refuge or the family shelter. Many manufacturers capitalized on public unease, and items ranging from torches to first aid boxes were all marketed as 'ARP' goods. Steel helmets could be purchased, as could moulded plastic and composition helmets which retailed at 13 shillings (65p) – not cheap, at around a labourer's daily wage. For building protection some 475 million sandbags were procured by the ARP. The nation was as prepared as it could be; now everyone waited.

Following the initial apprehension of attack immediately following the declaration of war, things settled down. The British Expeditionary Force was despatched to France – in the opinion of many, to 'drink tea and dig in' – while the Civil Defence and fire services drew their pay for 'doing nothing more than turning up'. During the seven-month 'Phoney War' period there was considerable discontent at the restrictions placed on society, but this mood was to change dramatically in May 1940.

### Dunkirk and its aftermath

The upkeep of morale became of paramount importance to the well-being of the Home Front, since the humiliatingly rapid defeat of British and French forces in May–June 1940 had a shocking impact. The controversial German decision to leave the battered remnant of the BEF besieged in the Dunkirk pocket rather than pressing home an immediate armoured assault allowed the British a brief opportunity to respond. In an episode that was to become legendary, the government not only committed strong elements of the Royal Navy and mobilized commercial shipping, but also called upon civilian owners of small boats in the south and east of England to sail for France, where they could be used to ferry men. Between 26 May and 3 June, under the brilliant leadership of Adml Bertram

### Equivalent money values

The pre-1970 £ sterling was divided into 20 shillings, each of 12 pence; thus in wartime £1 = 240 pence, and a wartime penny = 2.4 modern pence. Amounts were expressed as e.g. '£1 2s 6d' (or £1/2/6) – this being equivalent to today's £1.12 1/2p.

However, such sums in the 1940s context are meaningless in terms of today's buying power.

There are several different ways of calculating today's equivalent values for wartime amounts; but the most useful here is the Retail Price Index, based on average prices for a theoretical 'basket' of everyday products. A recent calculation from wartime to 2002 prices gives the following equivalents:

£1 in:	= in 2002
1939	£37.98
1940	£33.37
1941	£30.26
1942	£28.49
1943	£27.48
1944	£26.92
1945	£26.37

In 1942 the average weekly wage for a factory worker was about £4, and the basic rate for an Army private was 14s – roughly equivalent in today's purchasing power to £113.70, and £19.95 respectively.

This woman driver from the Southsea area in Civil Defence Region 6 wears the ARP 71 tunic, ARP 73 slacks and ARP 45 cap – a much smarter uniform than the original ARP 43 cotton driver's coat (see Plate A2).





Captured German bomber crewmen at a railway station during their transfer to a POW camp; they appear to be uninjured and well treated. In some areas it was not unknown for baled-out Luftwaffe aircrew to be severely beaten and occasionally even killed by angry civilians. Sometimes British airmen were mistaken for Germans and maltreated; one recalled that while he was being beaten the crowd commented on how good his English was...

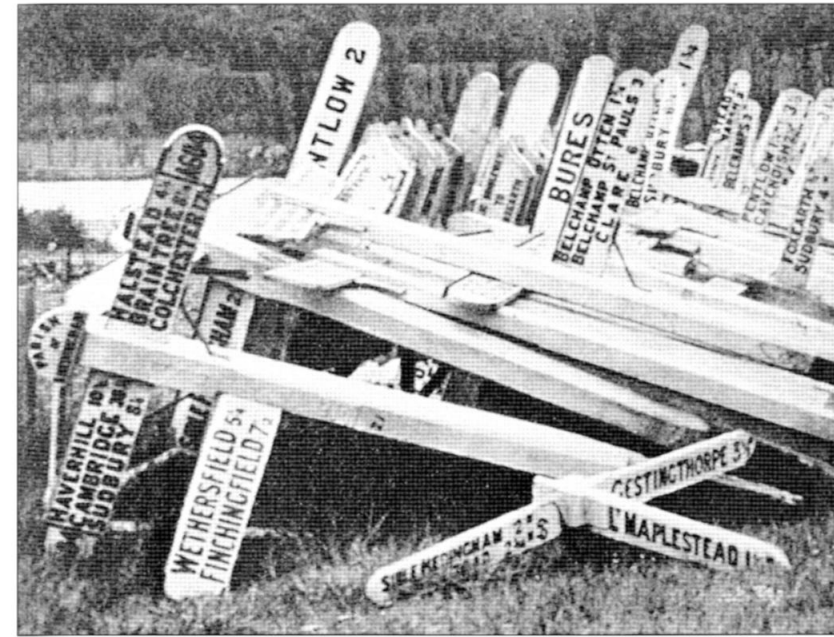
Ramsay in Dover, 338,226 men (including 112,546 French and Belgian troops) were saved from the beaches of Dunkirk, and in all nearly half a million troops were evacuated safely from northern France (leaving behind some 11,000 dead and 41,300 prisoners). This achievement had an inspiring effect on civilian morale, by proving that even in the face of the apparently invincible Wehrmacht the British were not doomed to be passive victims.

While the German propaganda machine dismissed the BEF as a beaten army, and boasted of having taken more than 1,200,000 French prisoners, their British counterparts made the most of the 'miracle of Dunkirk', praising the part played by civilians in the 'safe withdrawal' of an army that would 'soon return to wreak its vengeance'. Newspapers showed smiling Tommies disembarking at south coast ports clutching souvenir German helmets, and heartily tucking into 'char and wads' (tea and thick sandwiches). Some post-war accounts suggest that the BEF returned from France virtually empty handed, but this was not generally the case; few, other than the last hairs' breadth escapees, left the beaches without their weapons and kit. (Indeed, men who returned with issued effects missing were often brought to charge, and were expected to meet any deficiencies from their pay unless they could show good reason for the loss.) The true disaster was the number of vehicles and heavier weapons that had to be abandoned in France.<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to preserve the illusion created by the successful evacuation, the government decided to ignore the defeat and to capitalize on the propaganda. The troops returning from France were to be ushered to quiet rural areas of the country as quickly and as calmly as possible. The tired and dirty troops arriving in the sleepy villages of north Devon were typical of those distributed around the country. Inquisitive locals asking questions of these obvious veterans of the fighting in France were ordered away by police and MPs, while the men were spirited off to camps where they could rest and be re-equipped away from public scrutiny.

There is no space here for yet another account of the military events of the summer and autumn of 1940. The threat of German invasion loomed, and the nation prepared for the onslaught as best it could. While German transport craft were gathered in the ports and estuaries of occupied France and the Low Countries, the British military and civil defences remained on high alert for any sign of the start of Hitler's Operation 'Sealion'. German aircraft attempted to destroy the fabric of Britain's air defences. By October 1940 the Luftwaffe had failed to defeat RAF Fighter Command by day, a necessary precursor to invasion, and had changed their tactics to concentrate on bombing British cities and ports. In parallel with daylight raids, which began on 7 September but petered out after a few weeks, increasingly heavy night raids were suffered from 28 August. As autumn turned into winter, the German air effort was devoted to night bombing against which the RAF was initially almost helpless.<sup>2</sup> The war had come to the Home Front.

<sup>1</sup> See MAA 354, *The British Army 1939-45: (1) North-West Europe*  
<sup>2</sup> See Elite 104, *Britain's Air Defences 1939-45*. During winter 1940/41 only about 15 to 20 German aircraft were being shot down each month - although this rose to 70 in May 1941. During the last great fire raid on London, 10/11 May, 16 raiders were brought down.



The threat of enemy invasion led to local authorities removing all road signposts, in case they were of use to German troops. The enemy invasion never materialized; and drivers travelling outside familiar areas learned that good map-reading skills were essential.

### Internal security

Civil liberties were necessarily curtailed under the conditions of national emergency, and the population was exhorted to ceaseless vigilance. Government efforts to prevent the needless spreading of military and industrial information by idle gossip led to the 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' campaign. Posters appeared nationwide extolling the virtues of keeping information to oneself, as 'you never know who's listening'. The public were warned that idle comment - about which battalion had moved away, or a troopship's sailing date, or what war work was being undertaken by a factory - could have disastrous consequences if it reached enemy spies.

In reality the enemy espionage network in Britain was small and ineffective, and the training of those few who were parachuted, landed by boat, or otherwise delivered into the country was wholly inadequate. (One recently landed spy was quickly picked up in a Kent village after a pub landlord reported his obvious ignorance of the legal licensing hours.) Many of the captured enemy agents were 'turned' by the British intelligence services;

Soldier guarding a downed Junkers Ju88 bomber. When the great majority of Luftwaffe bombers - about 1,150 aircraft - were switched to night bombing in October 1940, the fast Ju88s, of which there were about 100, continued to mount occasional daylight raids for a few weeks.



of those not considered suited to the role of double agent, 15 were executed by firing squad at the Tower of London.

The campaign to protect sensitive information did have one unfortunate result. The exaggerated fear of 'fifth columnists' and some mythically vast German spy network led to suspicion and hostility towards all foreign nationals and strangers. At the end of 1939 more than 68,000 Germans, Austrians and Czechs were living in Britain; some were Jewish or other political refugees, and others simply innocent expatriates who had chosen to settle here years beforehand. These 'enemy aliens' were rounded up pending internment; in the summer of 1940 they were joined by some 4,000 Italian nationals, and the Isle of Man became the nation's internment camp. Conditions were spartan but fairly humane (they could not remotely be compared with those endured by detainees of the Germans); but many internees – particularly, of course, those who had already fled persecution on the Continent – suffered great distress. Although some were only held for a matter of weeks, it was to be 1943 before a sensible screening process had allowed most of the internees to be released, and many subsequently contributed valuably to the war effort against the Axis.

Alongside enemy aliens, British political undesirables were also rounded up. Fascist sympathisers such as Sir Oswald Mosley and members of his British Union of Fascists were among those that the government was quick to imprison for their political beliefs rather than for any proven treachery. (Even Mosley was released in 1943 – against the wishes of many individuals and wider political opinion.)

#### LABOUR & PRODUCTION

Prior to the outbreak of war a schedule of 'reserved occupations' was prepared, in order to prevent indiscriminate military recruiting among the nation's skilled labour pool and to ensure that certain trained and experienced workers would not be called away from vital jobs to join the armed forces. The schedule encompassed a huge range of trades in manufacturing, mining and agriculture.

On 22 May 1940 the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1940 was passed, giving the government complete control over persons and property – indeed, it gave the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, legal powers not

A young schoolboy gives the 'thumbs up' alongside the tail of a crashed Dornier bomber, apparently oblivious to the damage caused to surrounding houses. Schoolchildren avidly sought souvenirs from such locations, and would collect anything from 'shrapnel' to live ammunition and incendiary bombs. Since this was impossible to prevent, many schools eventually capitalized on it, displaying souvenirs to raise money for war charities and to spread awareness of the dangers.



dissimilar from those enjoyed by Hitler himself. In the same month trade unions agreed to let women work on war employment in trades previously barred to them, allowing countless men to be freed for military service.

#### Conscription of women

In the spring of 1941, under the Registration for Employment Order, all women within the age groups 18 to 50 were required to register in one of two categories, 'immobile' or 'mobile'. The immobile were normally women with dependants, such as those married with children, or the wives of men serving in the armed forces or Merchant Navy. These latter two groups were included in an effort to maintain the morale of



A milkmaid delivers milk by horse-drawn cart, a common practice during the war and for years afterwards. Her gas mask is worn slung over her shoulder in its cardboard box; since no gas attacks occurred, many civilians would soon get bored with this requirement and leave them at home, much to the chagrin of ARP officers.



men serving away from home; many men in North Africa had complained openly about the prospect of their wives being forced to move away from the family home to take up employment.

The mobile category comprised single women or other married women with no dependants. As an example of the breakdown within the categories, the 1909 (year of birth) class saw 333,000 women registered, of whom 260,000 were married – although the records give no indication as to the number of those married women who had dependants or a husband serving in the forces or Merchant Navy. The National Service (Number 2) Act, passed in December 1941, empowered the government to conscript all single or widowed women between the ages of 19 and 30; they were given the option of employment as auxiliaries in the WRNS, ATS or WAAF, or as workers in industry or agriculture.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1944 the recruitment of women into the auxiliary forces was deemed adequate, and an increased requirement for industrial labour saw the former option suspended; thereafter all women called up in the age group 20 to 25 were allocated to civilian jobs. By the end of 1944 only those women born in the years 1918–23 (21- to 26-year-olds in 1944) had actually been called up.

The Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order 1943 controlled movement of women workers aged 18 to 40 years. A single woman in her twenties would, under the Registration for Employment Order, be registered as mobile, but a number of other factors would decide whether she would actually be required to move away from her home area for employment. The Ministry of Labour had divided the country into colour-coded areas. 'Scarlet' defined an area in urgent need of unskilled female labour, including mobile labour brought in from other regions. 'Red' areas were in need of additional labour, but could manage with locally recruited unskilled women; these areas would not be required to deploy any mobile workers to other regions, but neither could they import labour from elsewhere. 'Green' areas had sufficient labour available to meet all local demand, allowing the export of mobile workers to 'scarlet' areas. In addition to the colour categories, the country was further divided into 11 regions defined as either 'supply' or 'demand', with the former providing labour for the latter.

In 1939, before the outbreak of war, there were 1,232,000 unemployed in the UK; by the end of 1943 this figure had dropped to 72,000, comprising mainly those unfit to work and those changing employment. Additionally, more than 840,000 women were employed as part-time workers in 1944.

With many postmen called into the armed forces, the mail continued to be delivered by women – just one of the hundreds of jobs that became open to them for the first time. Ultimately this new-found freedom would lead to many changes in post-war British society; but the expanded employment of women was purely a wartime expedient to make up the shortage of male workers. It did not change the government's or contemporary society's view that women were essentially mothers and homemakers, and that their employment was a temporary and wholly reversible necessity.

### The national labour force

The national population within the age groups 14 to 60 years was 33,100,000 in 1944, representing 15,900,000 men and 17,200,000 women. Of the women between the ages of 18 and 64, only 4,500,000 were single; 10 million were employed on essential household duties, and there were 9 million child dependants under 14 years of age. Just over 23 million persons were gainfully employed – 47 per cent in the armed forces, full-time Civil Defence or the munitions-related industries; 26 per cent in agriculture, utilities, transport and food manufacturing; and 27 per cent in building and civil engineering or other manufacturing industries. More than one million men and women over 65 years were also still in paid employment.

While urgent war work saw increased employment and output in some areas, other industries were greatly reduced; resources devoted to non-essential output – e.g. textiles, toys and pottery – were strictly controlled. In addition to their normal daily employment, workers were also required to undertake compulsory Home Guard, Civil Defence or fire-watching duties outside normal working hours. Only women with children under 14 years, or whose other personal circumstances exempted them, could avoid these additional obligations. Individuals often undertook all three duties, with CD ranks mustering as Home Guardsmen by adding an HG armband to the CD uniform, or guardsmen adding Fire Guard armbands to their battledress. It was official policy that all CD and HG ranks other than key personnel should be interchangeable in their duties as much as possible.

The additional burden of extra duties was immense. A fire-watcher was required to undertake 48 hours on this duty per month. A male worker already put in as many as 46–52 hours a week, with only two weeks annual holiday allowance, while women worked a 37–50 hour week (for an average weekly wage of £3 to £3 5s – about 25 per cent less than a male worker). Even so, the acute shortage of workers led to many mothers actually campaigning for facilities that would enable them to 'do their bit'. Mothers paraded through the streets with babies in prams and toddlers holding placards bearing such slogans as 'Nurseries for kids – Work for mothers'. Their efforts achieved some success; local authorities were officially urged to open nurseries and nursery schools, as well as to register 'daily guardians'; controlled by the Ministry of Health, women employed as child carers were considered to be undertaking essential war work. By December 1943 nearly a quarter of a million children were being cared for under the scheme, allowing many mothers the opportunity of working and – most importantly – earning.

Sadly, the fact that the nation was at war for its life was not always enough to prevent unrest in the workplace. Working regimes and conditions were harsh by today's standards; many were working

Char, a fag and the war news, rounded off with a steel helmet – just in case; this warden wearing a cheerful floral print dress seems comfortable in her work. The poster on the well-taped window proclaims 'Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution will bring us victory'.



<sup>3</sup> See MAA 357, *World War II Allied Women's Services*, and MAA 370, *World War II Allied Nursing Services*



Many photographs of working civilians in the 1940s show them looking small, badly fed, tired, and older than their actual age. Men like this worker had lived through the interwar Depression, when real hunger and shortage of affordable medical care left their mark. Wartime workers who also did compulsory fire-watching duties might easily put in a 70-hour week – while enduring disrupted and delayed public transport, broken nights, unappetising food, and the unavailability of a huge range of everyday goods. Given the dangers, anxieties and griefs of war, it is extraordinary that morale generally held up, and unsurprising that some gave in to the temptation to ‘look after number one’ if the opportunity offered.

extremely long hours, as well as fulfilling further public duties; and the government was dictating most of the routines of everyday life, from food consumption to pay rates. While the majority stoically accepted the needs of the nation as a whole, others were not so conscientious, and some workers took strike action to achieve their personal and political aims. Strikes by dockers directly threatened the nation’s food supplies and the war effort. A bus strike threatened to keep many of London’s workers away from their factories and offices, although its effects were minimized by the use of military vehicles on the most important routes. Coal miners downed tools, threatening to bring the nation to its knees unless their working conditions improved; miners’ strikes in 1942 and 1943 brought a number of concessions, but when the government was slow to implement these the angry miners went on strike once again. In February 1944 more than 200,000 tons of coal production was lost; by the end of the first quarter of the year that figure had risen to 1,600,000 tons, just at the time when the nation was preparing for the Normandy landings. Public sympathy for strikers was limited; the press violently attacked their behaviour, which was openly despised by those serving in uniform and by the populace in general. That the government did not respond with extreme coercion even at such a critical stage of the war underlines the difference between the democracies and the Axis regimes.

### The ‘Bevin Boys’

As had happened during the Great War, the huge expansion of the military led to shortages of manpower in many fields of employment. The reserved occupation scheme reduced the impact, but the shortfalls were aggravated by the wartime need for increased production. The coal industry was so badly affected that in October 1943 the Minister of Fuel and Power proposed that a percentage of the men called up for national service should be sent not into the forces, but into the mines (alongside the conscientious objectors who, for religious or moral reasons, felt themselves unable to serve in the military). The proposal was supported by Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, whose department took the measures allowing conscription of men for the coalmines; and his part in the scheme led to those called up being nicknamed ‘Bevin Boys’. The first batch were taken from among men born after 1 January 1918 and in medical category G1 (fully fit); they were chosen by ballot, with one in ten of the 18 to 25-year-old conscripts being diverted into the mining industry.

It was anticipated that they would undergo four weeks’ preliminary training, plus two weeks’ supervised training, and further specialist training as required. The men would become fully fledged miners in 12 or 18 months, although very few undertook work actually at the coalface, the majority working above ground. The first ballot took place on 14 December 1943, with a target figure of 30,000 newly trained miners by the end of April 1944. The first conscripts reported for training on 17 January 1944, in the coalfields of Warwickshire, Lancashire, Durham and Yorkshire. They came from all social backgrounds and walks of life. As miners they were paid two and a half times as much as a private soldier – £1 13s a week – plus a ‘settling-in’ supplement of £1 4s 6d.

### Wartime romances

Life in wartime was often lived at a heightened emotional tempo. Women whose husbands were overseas suffered from loneliness along with the other privations of war, and some gave way to the temptations offered by the countless men in uniform who were to be found all over the country. For single women, many of them working away from home and equally lonely, the temptation was as great and the inhibitions weaker. Local girls could meet young men in uniform at the regular dances and other social events – in the 1940s every town had its ‘Palais de Danse’. Alma Bowron enjoyed the many dances she attended as a teenager, well remembering the ‘rather nice Americans in their smart uniforms’. (Alma recalled that Australians were also very charming, but that she and her friends tended to steer clear of Canadian servicemen.) Romances sprang up rapidly; both men and women needed the comfort of each other’s company at a time when the future was very uncertain and the normal routines of their lives had been destroyed.

Casual sex became common, and for those so inclined there was even money to be made. The national rate of venereal disease rose by over 70 per cent in the two years up to June 1941, and the situation eventually began to cause grave concern. In October 1942 the Ministry of Health launched a major campaign to educate the nation about the threat posed by VD, and leaflets were issued containing pertinent advice. Although the official line still remained very much one of abstinence before marriage, this approach was obviously doomed to failure. The military were intolerant of VD, considering it to be an avoidable and therefore self-inflicted disease. One slogan presented to soldiers read: ‘If she’s got it, you’ll get it; if you get it, you’ve had it!’

Alongside the risk of disease was that of unwanted pregnancy. In 1939 there were 25,570 illegitimate births in the UK; by 1945 the annual figure exceeded 63,000. From a coldly material viewpoint these pregnancies reduced the number of women available for work, and added to the demand for food and clothing at a time when all resources were desperately limited. At a more human level, illegitimate births to the wives of men serving away from home were naturally bad for morale.

Besides transient relationships, however, many women did find true love and married their men in uniform. In 1940 the upheaval of war saw a surge in marriages, with nearly 471,000 couples becoming wed. By 1943 many men were serving overseas and the war was taking its toll socially as well as militarily; the marriage rate had dropped to just under 296,000, with one in three of these brides being under 21 years of age. By 1945 the return of the troops saw this figure rise to 398,000 marriages.

Many women found romance among the multitude of foreign servicemen, some marrying men from the Dominions and the USA.



This shot-down Messerschmitt Bf109E fighter was displayed in Windsor, Berkshire; eager civilians paid a small fee to gloat over the twisted remains. Such displays boosted morale and raised money for the war effort.

ATS girls fraternize with a US Army 'GI' and US Navy 'gob'. By 1944 Britain was awash with uniforms from all the Allied nations, but the girls always had a soft spot for the friendly and well-paid 'Yanks'. (An American private rated 'expert' earned at least £10 a month – nearly four times as much as his British equivalent.) The arrival at Belfast docks on 26 January 1942 of Pfc Milburn Henke, the first American soldier officially to set foot in the UK, heralded an easing of the chronic shortage of nylon stockings, perfume, and other scarce luxuries for some British women – albeit only for the lucky few. (Predictably, Nature's cruel lottery gave more stockings to the pretty and charming... ) For most, 'nylons' remained unobtainable; for lack of the real thing a liquid dye could be used to tan the legs, and the fashion-conscious drew a 'seam' down the back with eyebrow pencil.



Over 100,000 British women married Allied servicemen (although this was a very small percentage of the overall wartime marriages); and of these, over 80,000 found husbands in the American forces. Although it was never a declared policy, both the British and US governments – and particularly the military – considered that wartime marriages were a drain on resources and an administrative burden. They took soldiers' minds away from the task of defeating the enemy, and added to their concerns when separated. Occasionally a soldier's request for leave to marry would be arbitrarily refused by his commanding officer; more frequently, such requests would get lost, delayed in the system, or were blatantly ignored.

The provision of condoms and the tolerance of extramarital sex in the military was considered to lessen the desire for long term female companionship, and condoms further served to help reduce VD. The military's approach often clashed with that of the churches and frequently led to discontent among military chaplains; but it was felt – somewhat patronizingly – that if a soldier was able to satisfy his brute instincts adequately he would be more content in his work, and less likely to seek a long-term relationship or marriage. Relationships were also found to be the main cause of servicemen going AWOL, further fuelling the military's wish to reduce romantic longings while turning a blind eye to sexual encounters.

The nature of wartime romance – with its almost inevitable long separation from loved ones, and the haste with which many married – led to an increase in divorce rates. In the 1940s divorce was a serious

social disgrace; but although only 8,770 British couples were divorced in 1939, by 1945 the figure had nearly trebled to 27,789. The rise in marriages (many hastily arranged), divorces and illegitimate birth rates in 1945 can be explained by the national euphoria of peace, and the return home of countless servicemen keen to rekindle old relationships or find new ones.



THE PATENTED  
*Double Two*  
**SHIRT  
BLOUSE**  
WITH SPARE COLLAR

**"COUPONS  
being scarce..."**  
we'd put our shirt on a Double Two," says a Fashion expert. The spare collar ensures double wear. Available now in new shades, all sizes. 4 coupons. It is the smart woman's pride and joy.

In case of difficulty, write to:  
THE WAKEFIELD SHIRT CO. LTD.  
126E, KIRKGATE, WAKEFIELD.

A typical advertisement, this one from *Lilliput* magazine in June 1944. All clothing was available only against ration coupons, which were as important to quote as prices. A girl who got engaged – and her female friends and relatives – always faced a struggle to accumulate enough coupons for wedding outfits. Within families constant trading went on, with different types of coupons being exchanged; and clothing coupons were sometimes given as a very welcome wedding present.

'Phyllis and Johnny on their wedding day...': Staff Sergeant John Chabain found his war bride in the small north Devon village of South Molton. The villages near the training beaches of Devon were full of GIs and many romances blossomed, as elsewhere in the UK. In all, more than 80,000 British girls became 'GI brides'.

## RATIONING

### Food rations

The Ministry of Food, established in 1937, was responsible for distribution and the regulation of prices. By purchasing 90 per cent of imported human and animal foods the MoF was able to ensure a fair price system, as well as distributing finite supplies in a manner best suited to national needs. At the height of the 'Battle of the Atlantic' in 1942, some 500,000 tons of shipping was being lost monthly, resulting in as little as 70 per cent of the nation's imported food needs actually reaching our shores. The rationing system eased the effect of this German blockade. Sensible distribution, restriction of imported goods, and a total ban on imported luxuries reduced the strain on shipping space, while the reduction in overseas spending saved vital currency reserves. Price control was essential in the application of rationing, the key acts being the Prices of Goods Act of 1939, the Goods and Services Price Control Act in 1941, and the Utility Apparel (Maximum Prices) Order of 1941.

Rationing was introduced on 8 January 1940, some 18 weeks after the outbreak of war. Initially butter, bacon, ham and sugar were restricted, and over the next two years meat, cooking fat, tea, cheese, eggs, jam and sweets were also rationed. The rationing and distribution was not an *ad hoc* affair, but a carefully and scientifically devised system of ensuring a balanced diet and consumption of the necessary calories, proteins, and vitamins without waste or deficiency. To ensure that individuals received their entitlement of rationed goods a system of 'coupons' or vouchers was devised. These were issued in 'Ration Books' to the whole population, based upon the information from the national registration of 29 September 1939. Prior to July 1943 books were posted to individuals, but after that date they had to be collected in person and were issued only on production of a National Registration card. This was an effort to reduce fraudulent loss claims and thefts of ration books from the mail, such items having a high 'black market' value; more than 800,000 ration books had been 'lost' and replaced during the first year of their use. The ration book allowed individuals to buy their full personal allowance

of rationed goods if they so wished and could afford to do so.

The allowance of milk and eggs varied during the war, but averaged three pints per week and three eggs per month for each adult, costing around 3½d (1½ new pence). Milk and eggs were rationed by allocating available supplies to shops, the quantity being based upon the number of customers registered with the shop. There were special allowances for expectant mothers, who received 7 pints of milk per

week; infants were allowed 14 pints (also the top allowance for invalids), with other children receiving between 3 and 7 pints weekly. Twelve eggs per month was the prescribed allowance for children and expectant mothers, although unlike most other items, eggs were never guaranteed to be available – they rapidly became quite scarce, particularly in the inner cities. From 1942 a tin of 12 dried eggs, imported from the USA, was issued each month alongside the fresh egg ration. The following year saw the import of a million tons of dried eggs, equal to 5 million tons of fresh eggs but taking up only one-sixth the shipping space.

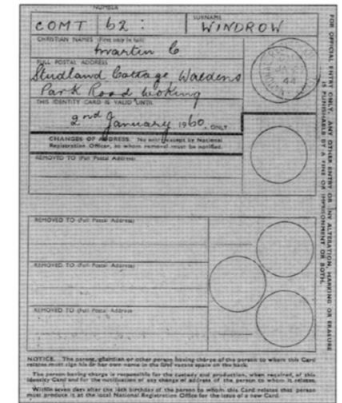
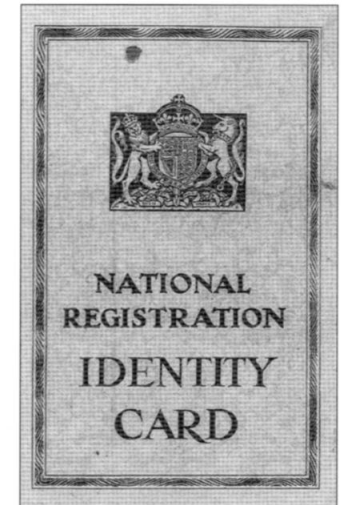
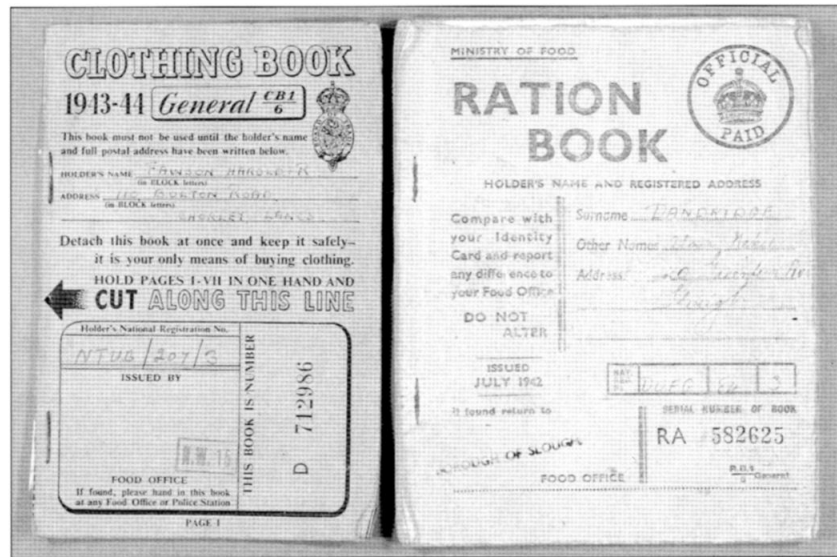
Fruit shortages were general. When they were available, all children were allowed two oranges, but most never saw one until after the war. Fruit juice was also available for infants up to 2 years, with cod liver oil for children up to 6 years old. Like oranges, lemons soon disappeared, followed by bananas, although dried banana was available in limited quantities. What little exotic fruit that was available soon rocketed in price: melons, for those lucky enough to find any, fetched a staggering £2 each in August 1941, and grapes were on sale at 17s 6d (87p) a pound – well beyond the reach of most families.

Special rations were also available for others apart from mothers and children. Typically, miners, farm labourers and other key workers who could not take a mid-day meal at home were allowed an extra allocation of cheese.

In addition to the vouchers in the ration book, there was also a 'points' allowance. The personal allocation of 16 points monthly could be used at any shop for the purchase of items such as biscuits, cereals, tinned fruit, tinned fish, syrup, and tinned milk. The points value of these foodstuffs varied depending on availability with, typically, a 1lb tin of Spam (processed meat) costing 16 points. As an example of changing values, a tin of salmon also cost a full month's allowance of 16 points in December 1941; but by March 1943 this had been raised to 32 points. The points system was fair, but far easier managed by those with larger families and a greater entitlement to points.

Not all items were rationed under the regulations, but the very limited availability of some – such as wines and spirits – imposed a natural restriction. Fish, poultry and sausages (of dubious content) were not rationed, and neither was the dietary staple of fried chips, but off-ration items were frequently in short supply or unavailable. Fish-and-chip shops played an important role in feeding workers and their families, but fish supplies were limited due to the risk to fishing vessels from enemy action. Anything that could be eaten was eaten; for instance, whale meat was regularly served from 1945, although it was universally unpopular. In October 1939 a campaign was launched to increase the volume of home-produced food. Allotments – extra garden plots – sprang up throughout the country; 'Dig for Victory' became a familiar slogan, and soon every available piece of land, including public parks and gardens, was being planted with vegetables. The MoF produced booklets, newspaper articles and wireless programmes to educate the public about nutrition; for instance, they suggested that carrots could be used in recipes as a replacement for sugar, and advised the cooking of potatoes unpeeled to retain the nutritional value of their skins. From early 1941 'British Restaurants' were opened, to provide meals at a reasonable cost to key workers.

A clothing book for the period 1943–44, and a ration book for 1942. Without these essential documents, and an ID card, it was impossible to purchase rationed food or clothing. A lucrative black market business soon built up to supply stolen ration books to anyone who was prepared to pay the price, attracting many otherwise respectable customers.



Every person in Britain had to carry their four-page identity card at all times, and to produce it when asked by a police officer, a member of the armed forces on duty, or any one of a wide range of officials. This example (top) is pale grey-green; inside it records the name and address, with several spaces for subsequent changes of address – a realistic feature, in wartime; a category letter; the holder's signature; and space for official endorsement stamps. Children's cards were marked 'Under Sixteen Years' on the cover, and even infants had to have one, to be filled in and carried by the parent or guardian; the buff card shown below was issued for the editor of this book when he was three weeks old.



A YMCA mobile canteen, funded by American donations, serves tea and buns to families without water due to bomb damage cutting off the mains supply. Note the YMCA officer in battledress.

Often staffed by the Women's Voluntary Service, these served food that was good by wartime standards, and eventually 1,000 restaurants were in operation.

To further reduce the strain on supply the variety of foodstuffs within any category was restricted. Of the 350 biscuit types available prior to the war, only 22 were still being produced by its end. Supply problems were further reduced by the 'zoning' of goods, whereby particular products were restricted to distribution within specific regions of the country. In particular, chocolate and other sweets were zoned, with items such as the popular Mars Bar only being available in the south of the country, while certain other sweets were restricted to the north. The zoning principles made specific use of locally produced items in order to reduce the need for transportation and fuel use. By 1943 sweets and chocolate were rationed at 3oz per person per week.

The shortage of foods could have had a severe effect on the nation's health; however, the well thought-out rationing system actually saw an improvement in national health levels that would have been impossible to achieve without wartime conditions and powers. Health improved due to government control of diet, and there was less tooth decay. Butter, sugar, fatty meat and sweets were eaten in moderation, and more vegetables and milk were consumed than had previously been the norm. By 1944 much of the average household's income was spent on food, 11s (55p) in every £1 being spent on rationed food and a further 2s (10p) on points-rationed items. This represented 65 per cent of a family's average available earnings. Fortunately, spending patterns were

very different from today's; little went on recreation, and rationing meant that there was little in the shops apart from necessities.


British readers under the age of 60 may not realize that the end of hostilities in 1945 did not lead to an immediate return to pre-war levels of food availability. Much to the anger of British housewives, rationing was to continue until 1949. There was little increase in weekly food availability other than an extra 1oz of bacon, and an extra 4d could be spent on meat. Bread had not been rationed during the war, but was actually added to the ration book in July 1946. This caused public uproar; but in reality, the ration allowance was generally more than most people actually consumed, as had often been the case with some of the items rationed throughout the war.

#### Clothing, domestic goods and fuel

Food was far from being the only commodity that was rationed. The restriction on the availability of clothing was announced by the President of the Board of Trade in a radio news broadcast on 1 June 1941: a ration allowance of 66 coupons per year was authorized. On average, a man's three-piece suit used up 26 coupons, a jacket and trousers 21, a lady's woollen dress 11, and a necktie 1 coupon. Nylon stockings were unobtainable, but were listed at 2 coupons.

In 1942 the Board of Trade's Civilian Clothing 1941 (Utility) Regulations were introduced, to govern the manufacture of clothes and similar goods. The main principle was that garments should be economic in materials and labour, but hard wearing – the longer they lasted, the greater the saving. To save material, pleats were abolished, along with double-breasted garments, long hems, and turn-ups on trousers. Garments manufactured under the regulations carried the 'CC41' logo, and the principles of the regulations were later applied to

**Keep this  
EXTRA MILK for  
the children**



**CADBURY'S Milk Chocolate**

A small quantity of Cadburys Milk Chocolate has been made. It is now being distributed fairly in the Western and Southern Zones. If you are lucky enough to get some, please let the children have it, for there is a glass and a half of full-cream milk to every half-pound block.

**CADBURY'S Milk Chocolate**

An advertisement from *Picture Post* of 9 September 1944, illustrating the restriction of supplies of certain brands of goods to particular zones of the country. Equivalent products of other brands, manufactured more locally, were supposed to be made available instead.

#### Some representative weekly ration allowances

Item	Jan 40	July 40	May 41	Dec 41	Feb 42
Bacon & ham	4oz	4oz	4oz	4oz	4oz
Sugar	12oz	8oz	8oz	12oz	8oz
Butter	4oz	6oz	6oz	7oz	6oz
Cooking fat	n/a	2oz	2oz	3oz	2oz
Meat (value*)	n/a	1s 10d	1s	1s 2d	1s 2d
Tea	n/a	n/a	2oz	2oz	2oz
Cheese**	n/a	n/a	1oz	3oz	3oz
Jam	n/a	n/a	8oz	1lb	1lb
Points	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	20

\* Meat was rationed by value, allowing the purchase of cheaper cuts in larger amounts or a reduced weight of better. The ration allowance for meat varied; at its lowest it was only 1s a week, reaching a high of 2s. For a short period a portion of the meat ration had to be taken as corned beef. In terms of everyday purchasing value, £1 (1940) = £33.37 (2002) and £1 (1942) = £28.49 (2002); so 1s 10d (1940) was the equivalent of £3.03 (2002), and 1s 2d (1942) of only £1.65 (2002).  
\*\* Cheese reached a wartime low of 1oz and a peak of 4oz weekly.



On 4 September 1939 the National ARP for Animals Committee (NARPAC) publicized an announcement that – contrary to a widespread belief – supplies of animal food would not be discontinued, and there was no need to have pets destroyed; this appeal was made after 7,000 dogs and 5,000 cats had been put down in London alone on the previous Saturday. (However, London Zoo did destroy their poisonous snakes and spiders, in case they escaped if the zoo was hit.) There were 1,500 animal specialist ARP wardens, and animal welfare organizations such as the Blue Cross and People's Dispensary for Sick Animals provided advice to animal owners on caring for them during raids. Some special search and rescue units – like this PDSA team – used dogs to locate pets trapped in bombed buildings, and searched for those that had fled in terror during raids. Despite British sentimentality, however, the saving of human casualties always took priority.

many fields of manufacturing, particularly furniture. It was an offence to remove or obliterate the logo from any product.

New furniture was generally available only to those setting up house – newly married couples, those who had been bombed out of their homes, or homes housing billeted workers or evacuees where additional furnishings were needed. Similarly, beds could be obtained for infants who had outgrown a cot. The production of all non-essential items was severely curtailed during the war. As an example, 10 million ladies' handbags were produced in 1935, but only one million in 1943, and all within the CC41 regulations. Household carpets used a vast quantity of raw materials. Some 34 million square yards were manufactured in 1935, but in 1943 only 1,500,00 square yards were produced for the domestic market, and by this stage new production was aimed wholly at those who needed replacements for goods lost.

The production of many non-essential items had been stopped altogether by 1942, and this category included such things as civilian cars, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, lawnmowers, aluminium hollow ware, and pianos. While the production of private cars was discontinued, motorcycles remained in limited production; civilian motorcycle manufacture for 1935 was some 47,000 machines, dropping to 2,000 by 1943, and these were only available to those with a satisfactory justification.

Fuels were naturally among the most strategic commodities of all. Petrol was rationed from 16 September 1939, and coal and electricity in November that year. Consumption of these latter by domestic and small industry users was limited to 75 per cent of that previously used in the quarter ending 30 June 1939 (equating to the spring season), but was

not rationed below 100 therms of gas or 200 units of electricity per quarter. In July 1941 domestic users were further restricted to 1 ton of coal or coke a month. The Ministry of Fuel, Light & Power further urged that baths be taken in only 5in of warm water, and that this should be shared within the family wherever possible. Added to this, soap was rationed in 1942 to 3oz per month – equivalent to one small bar. Shaving soap and cream were not rationed, but were nonetheless very scarce, while razor blades were nearly unobtainable.

While marriages increased during the war, the celebrations after the ceremony were severely curtailed, since under rationing few luxuries were available to the average couple for a reception. However, a special government permit did offer limited provision for wedding guests, allowing some additional food and drink for up to 40 people. Traditional wedding cakes were replaced by hired facsimiles, often made of card and decorated with plaster and trimmings to resemble a real cake. This would be accompanied by a small, ration-conscious home-made cake for the guests to eat, probably without icing or cream fillings. Like the cake, the wedding dress would have to be hired and would undoubtedly have been made under the CC41 regulations. The restrictions did not end there: regulations further instructed that wedding rings were to be of 9 carat gold, and 22 carat was unobtainable.

The shortage of clothing and household necessities brought about a spirit of 'make do and mend'. Much effort was put into educating people to the virtues of making everything last that little bit longer, by repairing rather than discarding. As early as July 1937 national

The contribution to the war effort made by animals was significant: dogs sniffed out buried casualties and enemy bombs, and served as guard dogs – here an RAF officer accepts into service an Alsatian donated by its owner. Even carrier pigeons played their part, saving airmen downed at sea by relaying their positions to rescue services. In 1943 the founder of the PDSA, Maria Dickin, instituted a special medal for animals whose actions had saved human life or were otherwise worthy of acknowledgement, and this Dickin Medal is still awarded.





Mixed emotions are evident as a sailor parts from his family, a scene repeated countless times throughout the country. For nearly 400,000 British families these would be the last farewells – and it would not always be the serviceman who perished. In this early war photo the seaman's white summer cap is still being worn, along with the naval pattern respirator with additional waist strap to the haversack.

campaigns had been undertaken for the collection of scrap. During the war household and other waste ceased to exist as rubbish and became essential war matériel; tins, food, paper and bones were all recycled for the war effort. Wartime scrap drives cleared attics and outhouses of valuable resources such as fabrics and metals, while many ornamental metal railings were removed from homes, parks and public buildings. A shortage of aircraft-grade aluminium led to mass collections of old pots and pans in 1940 and again in 1941. Housewives were urged to do their bit for the vital aviation industry, being told that 2,000

saucepans would make one Spitfire; this was often criticized as a useless propaganda exercise, since much of the aluminium collected was unsuited for aircraft manufacture. It was, however, used for other purposes, thus leaving the best raw materials for use by the aircraft factories. Interestingly, the return of peace in 1945 saw many aircraft being scrapped; some actually ended up as saucepans, but many 'prefabs' (prefabricated homes – first introduced for bombed-out civilians in 1944) were also made from the salvaged aluminium, at a time when accommodation was at a premium.

### The 'black market' and looting

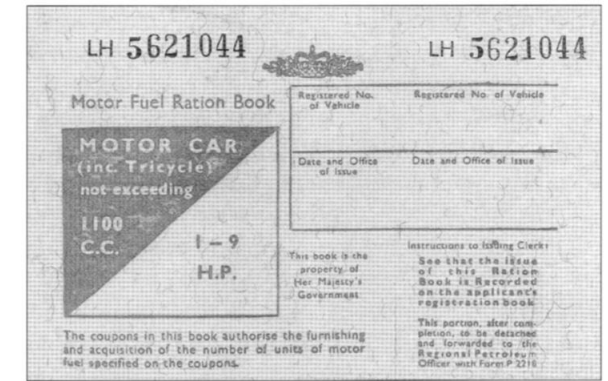
In the post-war period the black market has come to be seen as a harmless game, typified by the antics of the roguish Private Walker in the popular television series *Dad's Army*. Certain individuals could always obtain the odd bottle of Scotch, tank of petrol, a fine steak or even a spare ration book – for a price. It was generally the better-off who were able to take advantage of the black market, although they would normally have been horrified by the thought that some would steal from the many to provide for the few. In essence the black market did just that, but for many people the weary drudgery of wartime life soon overcame their finer principles. The rationing that made the best use of the nation's resources, and attempted to ensure that all – regardless of position or pocket – were adequately fed and clothed, was what led to the rise of the black market. The shortages they endured tempted many to suppress the knowledge that their actions were criminal; but the fact that one person was able to buy a little extra from some backstreet 'spiv' probably meant that elsewhere someone went short.

Many of the petty criminals living off the proceeds of the black market were avoiding service in the forces, having gone to ground before, or sometimes after, call-up. Not surprisingly, much effort was put into stamping out the black market; but demand ensures supply, and very few individuals were able to pass up the chance of a little something extra for themselves or – perhaps as often – for their children. The black market was stocked both by petty thieves and by highly organized gangs; many were ingenious and resourceful, often using 'official' vehicles to avoid notice.

Looting from bombed buildings became chronic; in a generation which had grown up in times of desperate want, many genuinely convinced themselves that personal possessions from bombed homes were essentially 'ownerless'. Less understandable was the macabre ruthlessness of the many people who stole money and jewellery from air raid casualties. An official investigation in one large borough undertaken by ARP and Auxiliary Fire Service personnel attending the scene; logically, this further indicated that the other half of the thefts were being committed by scavenging members of the public. Looting was only one illustration of how social values had been warped by war. During the latter part of the war, most crime rates spiralled; burglary and violent crime doubled, and murder became almost commonplace. It was easier to commit crimes and to avoid arrest due to the blackout, and the vast numbers of transient individuals passing through towns and cities.

### Evacuation

The huge casualties among civilians during the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1932 and the destruction of the Spanish town of Guernica in February 1939 were common knowledge. Consequently the government drew up contingency plans to evacuate as many children as possible from likely target areas to safer rural locations. The country was geographically divided into areas: 'evacuation areas', from which children would be removed, included cities such as London, Portsmouth, Sheffield and Glasgow; 'reception areas' were mainly rural, including Devon, East Anglia, Kent and Wales; in 'neutral areas' no specific measures were to be taken. Under the apt codename 'Pied Piper', administrative arrangements were planned for moving an anticipated 3,500,000 children and mothers. Food, transport and accommodation were arranged, as were visits by parents who were to remain in the cities. It was planned that older children would travel in school groups with teachers or helpers, often WVS women. Infants were to travel with their mothers, and expectant mothers would also be evacuated. In the rural areas billeting officers would allocate the children to suitable homes. The householder would be paid 10s 6d (55p) weekly for the first child, but if more than one were housed the payment would be 8s 6d (43p) each. Although much of this was paid by the government, parents of evacuees who could afford to do so were required to contribute, Londoners paying 6s (30p) a week.



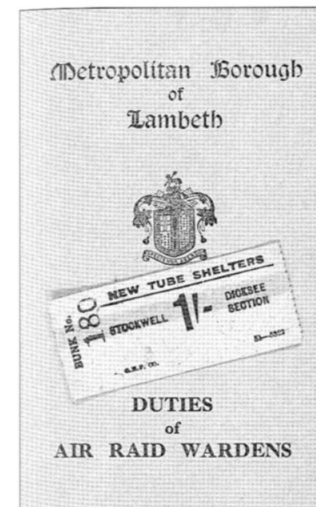
Fuel for private motoring was one of the most strictly rationed commodities, and books of tear-out coupons were issued for six months at a time. That for a car of up to 1100cc (above – red on buff with black numbers, the Queen's crown motif presumably identifying a post-war 1950s issue) contained coupons for four 'N' units and two 'L' units per month; half this number of units were allowed for a motorcycle of up to 250cc (below – the individual coupons were printed in different colours each month). When buying petrol the driver handed over a coupon, upon the back of which the dealer had to enter the vehicle registration number and the quantity supplied. Fuel was a prime target for the black marketeers, leading to fuel for service use being colour-dyed so that it could be identified if stolen or illegally sold on.

During the 1938 Munich scare small groups had been moved out of the cities, but the greatest effort was to take place in September 1939. Within weeks of the invasion of Poland and the declaration of war against Germany, 536,000 infants, their mothers and expectant mothers had been evacuated, along with 930,000 schoolchildren, teachers and helpers, with an average of one teacher or helper for every five children.

The ease with which Hitler overran Europe made many parents uneasy about the threat of invasion, and some felt that their children would be safer overseas. Children and mothers were evacuated to the USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa under the guidance of the Children's Overseas Reception Board (who had approved 19,365 children for evacuation by August 1939), or under private arrangements. Such extreme measures were not without their risks. On 17 September 1940 the liner *City of Benares* was sailing from Liverpool to Montreal as part of the unescorted convoy OB213, carrying civilian passengers, many of them children. The vessel was torpedoed and soon sank with the loss of 258 lives, 77 of whom were children. After this loss the risks were deemed too great, and the official evacuation of children overseas was soon stopped. One 10-year-old Bristol resident, Barbra Hume, had been booked as an evacuee passenger, but as her new passport had failed to arrive she had missed the sailing of the *City of Benares*. This was a case of second time lucky for Barbra; her family had moved to Bristol from Liverpool, where their old home later received a direct hit, wiping out the family then living there.

Despite the widespread fear of bombing, only about 1,500,000 families participated in the evacuation scheme – less than half the government estimates. The Phoney War of 1939–40 lulled many parents

In a poignant image, heavily laden troops march past child evacuees being removed from the danger of inner cities. The quiet of the 'Phoney War' saw many evacuees returning home, only to leave once again when the bombing began in earnest.



An ARP booklet, reflecting the local level at which much civil defence activity was organized; and a one shilling (1/-) ticket for a bunk in an Underground station shelter – an optional extra comfort for those who chose to buy it.

into believing that the heartache of separation was worse than any benefits offered by the safety of the countryside. By Christmas 1939 many children had returned to the cities, some to stay, others merely for a Christmas with their families. By the following spring 75 per cent of evacuees had returned home; but in June 1940 the fall of France saw the reception areas of South-East England become evacuation areas, as 200,000 children were evacuated or re-evacuated under the threat of invasion. The same month saw the arrival in England of 29,000 people from the Channel Islands, abandoned to German occupation; and in September 10,500 more were evacuated to London from Gibraltar – just in time to suffer the first major bombing raids of the 'Blitz'. Within days a further wave of evacuation out of the cities had commenced. The beginning of the *Vergeltungswaffe* ('reprisal weapon') rocket attacks in June 1944 saw renewed evacuation from London; although the numbers were much smaller than in 1939–40, 170,000 evacuees were removed from the VI target areas.

In addition to the vulnerable, essential civil servants and their documents were also moved from endangered regions, over 25,000 government staff being relocated to safety. The nation's heritage was also remembered, and many works of art were moved from galleries and museums for protective storage, often being deposited in disused mines.

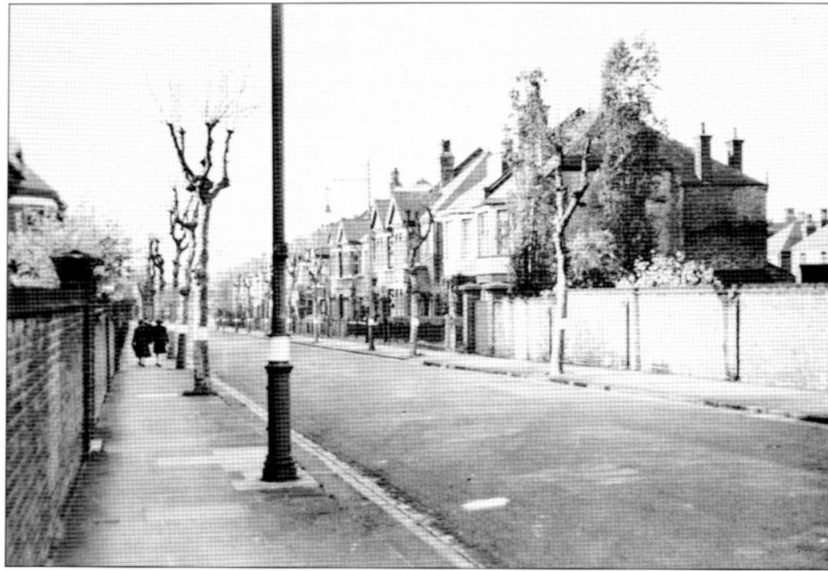
## THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE UNITED KINGDOM

### The Blitz, 1940–41

The greatest perceived threat to civilians was aerial bombing with high explosive, incendiaries and poison gas, and in the prelude to war much emphasis was placed on preparing the population for this test. It was sensibly believed that the greater the knowledge, the greater would be the public's ability to protect themselves and the less damaging the impact upon morale.

In July 1939 'blackout' trials – the switching off or concealment of all night lighting in public places and domestic premises – were conducted in many parts of the country. On 9 August London was blacked out for the first time, allowing the authorities to judge the effectiveness of the regulations and to identify any major problems. On 1 September 1939 the blackout regulations came into force nationwide. At first the restrictions applied to street lighting, homes, factories and business premises but not motor vehicles; this oversight was corrected in early 1940, by which time the public were becoming weary of wartime restrictions that seemed pointless. Vehicle lights had to be masked except for small exposed slits, which were almost useless; the restrictions led to a dramatic increase in accidents, and particularly in the number of pedestrians being killed. Little could be done other than to urge greater care; a major campaign was launched, with newspapers carrying what were for those days unusually graphic advertisements depicting the human cost of accidents. (On a lighter note, September 1939 saw many of Hampshire's wild New Forest ponies being given a coat of whitewash, making them more visible as they roamed the forest roads by night.)

A peaceful street, typical of any town or city in England. The only indications that there is a war on are the white markings painted on the street lamps for high visibility during the 'blackout', and the crosses of adhesive tape visible on some of the house windows.



A similar street after a night of bombing. Although not designed to survive a direct hit, the family Anderson shelter (foreground) seems to have withstood the devastation. As an example, during the war the city of Southampton lost 3,589 buildings to enemy action and a further 40,000 damaged. Official national figures announced on 28 November 1944 (when the V-weapon campaign still had months to run) gave 202,000 houses already destroyed and 255,000 so heavily damaged as to be uninhabitable, plus 4,075,000 with lesser damage. At least 460,000 families were therefore made homeless – probably 2 million people, or about 3.6 per cent of pre-war households.



Despite having lost three of the outer walls to a bomb blast, the furniture and fittings in this bedroom seem remarkably intact – a strange effect that was often noted. Although the bed is covered with brick rubble, items are still hanging on the inside of the door and a china washbowl and jug stand on the dresser. The loss of homes to enemy action led to the introduction in 1944 of 'Prefabs', prefabricated sectional bungalows that were economical and easy to construct. These proved so popular with inhabitants of the inner cities that up to 20 years later they were sometimes reluctant to move when rehoused by local authorities.

Grumbling and carelessness over the petty annoyances of wartime restrictions decreased sharply from 7/8 September 1940, when the first massed air raid on London's East End and Docklands caused over 2,000 casualties. Raids on London and other industrial and port cities escalated thereafter; by 12 November some 15,000 Londoners had been killed, many more than that number injured, and 250,000 made homeless. On 14 November, Coventry was hit by a raid that caused some 1,100 casualties, destroyed 21 factories and almost one-third of the city's homes; the German propaganda machine used the name of Coventry thereafter as a term to describe total destruction. During the month of November alone 4,588 British civilians were killed and 6,202 injured. Between 7 September 1940 and 10 May 1941 the capital and other cities

An ARP demolition worker hands over the remains of a shattered 'wireless set' to the unfortunate occupants of a demolished home – perhaps some of the valuable radio valves can be reused. Every effort was made to salvage as much property as possible, but the widespread problem of looting of valuables from bomb sites was never overcome, despite public condemnation. The warden wears ARP 41 overalls and 'gum boots', and has an ARP 55 axe tucked into his belt.



were subjected to the terror and destruction of the Blitz every single night. The London raid of 10/11 May was the last major attack of this phase, and undoubtedly the worst: 1,436 civilians were killed and 1,792 seriously injured, and one-third of the streets in Greater London were rendered impassable to motor traffic.

The end of the 1940–41 Blitz offensive did not bring bombing to an end; raids continued nationwide, although on a reduced scale. April 1942 saw the start of a series of raids on provincial cities; called the 'Baedeker raids' after a tourist guide which it was suggested had been used to identify targets, these hit cathedral cities such as Exeter, Bath, Norwich, York and Canterbury. The next phase were the 'Steinbock raids' – the 'little' or 'baby Blitz', which ran from 21 January to 29 May 1944. By this time Luftwaffe bomber strength in the West was greatly reduced and RAF night fighters much more effective; but the Germans now moved to a terrifying new type of aerial assault.

### The V-weapons

The first 'Vergeltungswaffen' campaign commenced on 12 June 1944 and lasted until 5 September. Allied intelligence had been aware of German work on pilotless guided bombs (in modern terms, 'cruise missiles') since 1943 due to information filtering in from agents in occupied Europe; and RAF raids against installations at Peenemunde on the Baltic had delayed progress. Intelligence had given the V1 flying bombs an estimated speed of 200mph (in reality they could reach 400mph), and indicated their targets as being the Solent area, Bristol and London. On 7 December 1943 a major threat warning was passed to Anti-Aircraft Command; in defence of London a protective belt of 1,000 guns, searchlights and barrage balloons was to be positioned between the capital and the sea. Similar defences were to be provided for Bristol; but due to their coastal locations and the nature of the threat, it was felt impossible to give much extra protection to the Solent ports of Portsmouth and Southampton. The impending invasion of mainland Europe saw an initial abandonment of the defence plans, followed by a revision before their final implementation.

On 12 June 1944, a week after the Allies had landed in Normandy, 27 V1s crossed the English Channel heading for targets in Kent, Sussex and London. This initial foray was thought to be merely a test run for a major offensive to follow much later; but it was only two more nights before the German launch programme began in earnest. By the time this first V1 campaign was effectively ended by the British 2nd Army overrunning the launch sites in the Pas de Calais in August, about 9,017 had been launched. Of these, 6,725 had been recorded over the UK, of which 3,463 were destroyed by AA fire and RAF fighters. London had been the main target area, although some had been directed at Southampton and Portsmouth. Of the total plotted, some 34 per cent reached their planned target areas.

The loss of the fixed launch sites did not end the use of the V1, but changed the method of its deployment: the Luftwaffe now relied on aircraft as launch platforms. Some 400 V1s had been launched in this manner during the first offensive, mainly against Southampton and Gloucester, by bombers of Kampfgeschwader 3. Beginning on 16 September 1944, the second phase of the campaign employed around 100 Heinkel He111 bombers of Kampfgeschwader 53 flying from Venlo in the Netherlands. This second phase targeted the east coast of England. By December 1944 the 2nd Army had advanced to the Meuse river, forcing the He111 launch units back to the Bremen and Hamburg area. By mid-January 1945 aircraft losses, bad weather, fuel shortages and bombing of German airfields had brought the Heinkel launch missions to an end. As many as 1,200 V1s were launched during this second phase, 638 being recorded by the British defences, which destroyed 403 of them.

There was a lull during the winter of 1944–45 before the final phase commenced, from sites in Holland, on 3 March. After the launch of only 275 further V1s (modified for increased range), the 'Doodlebug' campaign came to an abrupt end.

Meanwhile, the Germans' devastating V2 (A4) rocket had been targeted against London since 7 September 1944, although many – like the V1s – had fallen short throughout Kent; the following month the V2 was also unleashed against the liberated cities of Antwerp and Brussels.<sup>4</sup> Carrying a larger warhead than the V1 (2,150lb, rather than 1,875lb), the V2 was in fact less efficient, since it buried itself deeply on impact. Unlike the V1, it could neither be seen nor heard, let alone intercepted by fighters; impacting at about three times the speed of sound, it gave no warning of its approach. The Civil Defence services were surprised by the first impacts and had no idea what had happened, believing that buried aerial mines or large bombs must have detonated after long delays. The government at first laid the blame unconvincingly on 'gas main explosions', and this inexplicable 'silent death' caused public unease. Generally, although the casualties caused by both the V-weapons were less than those suffered during heavy bombing raids, the effect on morale was more damaging. While the V2 could not be intercepted, and exploded without warning, the V1 could be both seen and heard, and waiting for the tell-tale cutting-out of its pulse jet engine was an ordeal in itself.

### Tonnage of bombs dropped on UK, 1939–45

1939	100 metric tons
1940	34,870
1941	22,176
1942	3,032
1943	2,239
1944	1,963
1945	13

V1 & V2 warhead tonnage, 1944–45: 6,602

Total 70,995 metric tons

<sup>4</sup> See New Vanguard 82, V2 Ballistic Missile 1942–52

Following the previous night's bombing, NFS crews douse the smouldering ruins in a Southampton street. Vast quantities of water were required at such times, often supplied from large Emergency Water Supply tanks located at convenient positions in towns, frequently on the site of previously destroyed buildings. (The tanks themselves were another cause of danger, since they were a magnet for children during hot weather, and significant numbers were drowned.)

Fatalities from V2 ('Big Ben') impacts in England reached a peak average of 250 per week during November 1944, although prior to this the first 100 impacts – up to the end of October – had killed only 82 people. The V2s were fired from mobile launch sites, making their bombing by the Allies almost impossible, and enabling launches to be continued from north-west Holland as the Allies advanced through France and Belgium. Rockets launched against England from Holland continued to cause up to 150 deaths weekly during this time, but after the rapid loss of German-controlled territory the last V2 fell on 27 March 1945, a few days before the last V1 impact. That V2, which fell on Orpington, Kent, caused the war's last civilian death attributable to enemy action.

It is not widely known that the Germans had also constructed a V3 weapon. This was a 'supergun' with a 400ft smoothbore barrel capable of sending 75 rounds an hour out to a range of 100 miles. The first of 30 planned sites was built on a hillside at Mimoyecques, less than 95 miles from London; a second was destroyed by Allied bombing. There is evidence to suggest that a number of test rounds were successfully fired across the Channel, their impacts being recorded as of unknown origin or V2s. Fortunately the static nature of the gun meant that it soon fell to advancing British troops.

(continued on page 41)



- 1: Member, ARP Rescue Party; Portsmouth, 1940
- 2: Driver, ARP; Coventry, 1941
- 3: Firewoman, AFS; London, 1941



- 1: Volunteer, WVS; London, 1940
- 2: Evacuee child; Home Counties, 1940
- 3: Civilian gas masks, 1939



- 1: 'Land girl', WLA; West Country, 1943
- 2: 'Lumber Jill', WTC; East Anglia, 1945
- 3: Fire Guard 'No.2'; SE England, 1944



- 1: Leading Fireman, NFS; Essex, 1943
- 2: Driver, CD; Gosport, 1944
- 3: Chief Warden, CD; Cambridge, 1944



2



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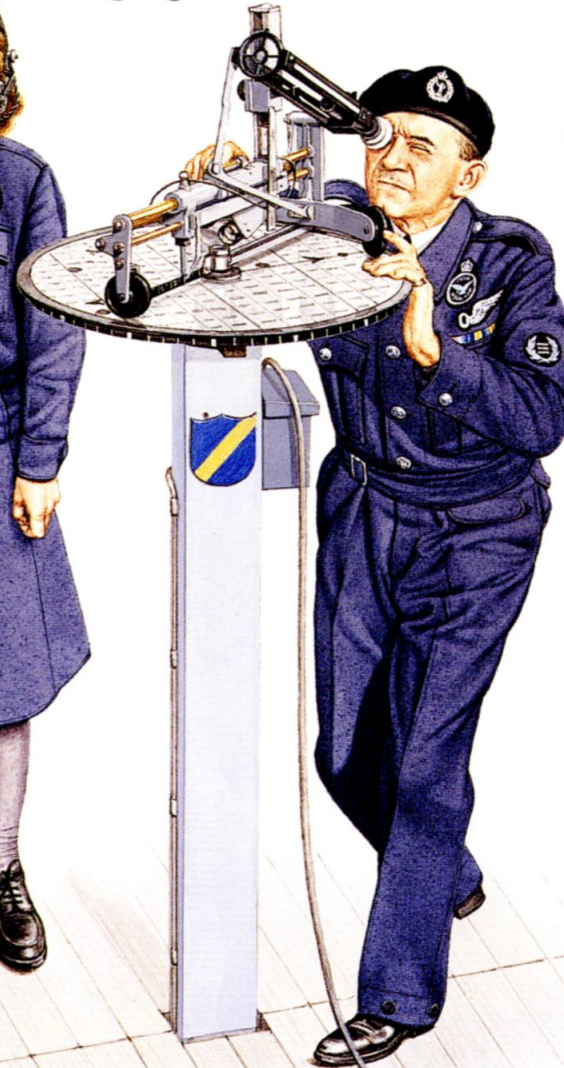


3

- 1: Observer, ROC; Kent, 1943
- 2: Woman Observer, ROC; Sussex, 1944
- 3: Ferry pilot, ATA; Hamble, 1944



2



1



3

- 1: Driver, MTC; London, 1943
- 2: Canteen worker, NAAFI; Catterick, 1943
- 3: Driver, WTS (FANY); London, 1944



- 1: Platoon Commander, LDV, summer 1940
- 2: Corporal, Home Guard; Dorset, 1943
- 3: HG Auxiliary; Sussex, 1944



- 1: Police Constable
- 2: Auxiliary, WAPC
- 3: Munitions worker, ROF; Birmingham, 1945
- 4: Member, CD First Aid Party; Midlands, 1944



### Anti-personnel bombs

The SD2 'butterfly' anti-personnel bomb had no other function than to kill and maim people. Although first used in October 1940, few AP bombs were employed until the night of 13 June 1943, when they were dropped in some numbers during a raid on Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The local population were relatively unprepared; warning notices had been issued, but most remained on the walls of the local town hall and ARP offices. Emerging from their shelters after the 'All clear' siren sounded, the townspeople found small, curiously shaped devices littering streets, gardens, trees, telegraph wires, and the occasional front room. An inquisitive sailor was one of the first casualties, killed when he prodding one with his foot.

Further deaths were to follow; the SD2 caused some 163 casualties, and news of the threat soon spread through the two towns. There was some fear of going about day-to-day business lest one of the 'butterfly bombs' be stumbled upon and detonated, and Grimsby and Cleethorpes ground to a halt; it was a full week before they were declared clear of the devices. Most of the 1,600 unexploded SD2s were disposed of, on the spot or after being moved the minimum distance, by controlled detonation. Apparently unaware of the panic and disruption the raid had caused, the Germans made no further attempts to use the SD2 in such concentration.

Although German bombs were the main consideration for the bomb disposal services, from the outset of war the Irish Republican Army had undertaken a campaign of disruption on the British mainland. Although a nuisance rather than a major threat, a number of IRA devices did explode, particularly in Birmingham.

As the home to a major southern naval base, Portsmouth was one of many cities to suffer repeated raids during the 1940-41 Blitz. This view of the King's Road shows the amount of damage inflicted on this commercial area of the city. The heaviest German weapon dropped was the so-called 'land mine', in fact a Type GG adaptation of the 2,000lb marine parachute mine. About 470 of these were dropped in 1940; a typical strike, in Paragon Road, Hackney, East London on 15/16 October killed 13 people and left 2,000 homeless.



## Casualties

While there were many incidents which saw heavy loss of life, a few are worth mentioning as an indication of the impact upon local people and morale in general. On 20 January 1943, a 500kg (1,100lb) bomb struck Sandhurst Road School in Catford, London; the blast killed 38 children and six teachers, injuring many more. Just over a month later, on 3 March, the London Underground station shelter at Bethnal Green became the site of an avoidable disaster. As hundreds of people were making their way down to the shelter following the sounding of the air raid warning siren, one woman tripped on the stairs; 173 people were killed and more than 60 injured in the crush which followed. In the early morning of 8 March 1945, London's Smithfield Market was busy with traders and shoppers when a V2 fell without warning; more than 100 people were killed instantly and countless others injured.

Total casualties throughout the war from enemy bombing, rocket weapons and cross-Channel artillery bombardment were 146,777 civilians, of whom 60,595 were killed or died of their injuries. Of the total casualties, 80,397 (including nine-tenths of those caused by V1 and V2s) occurred in the London region. The V1 caused 6,184 deaths and over 17,981 injuries in the UK, and the V2, 2,754 dead and a further 6,523 injured. Although these figures speak for themselves, the cost to civilians on the Home Front can be further emphasized by noting that the British Army in the Far East, 1941-45, suffered 5,670 men killed in action; and that even those killed in NW Europe between June 1944 and May 1945 - a campaign terribly costly in infantry and tank crew casualties - numbered just half the wartime civilian total.

A cheerful woman ARP warden wearing the ARP 42 coat and Mk II steel helmet over her own clothing. The 'civilian duty respirator' is carried in its hessian bag with a drawstring-top.



## THE HOME FRONT SERVICES

### Air Raid Precautions & Civil Defence

In autumn 1937 the Air Raid Precautions Act had called for some 800,000 volunteers to be trained; planning had in fact been underway since 1935. The armed forces were responsible for first-line defence; but it was acknowledged that even their greatest efforts would not prevent a determined enemy from pressing home air attacks, and that a national organization would be needed to limit their effects. The Civil Defence Act of July 1939 stated that civil defence encompassed all the organizations that contributed to the limitation of damage and disruption from enemy bombing, but would rely primarily on the Air Raid Precautions organization. Local authorities, under the guidance of the Ministry of Home Security, were responsible for their own CD preparations.

Blackout regulations were strictly imposed from sunset to sunrise, and the courts could punish those who flouted them with from three



months' to two years' imprisonment and fines between £100 and £500 - a considerable deterrent. ARP wardens would call at any premises showing a light; police officers on patrol would routinely list any commercial premises that had left lights on, for further action as necessary.

The previously voluntary ARP personnel were joined by full-time workers from 1 September 1939; men were paid £3 a week and women £2, with a 5s (25p) raise in July 1940. During 'standby' periods normal work shifts for full-time CD staff were 72 hours for men, in six 12-hour shifts per week, and 48 hours for women. By June 1940 more than 50,000 women were in full-time CD work, and at the height of the Blitz one in six wardens were women. Full-time ARP staff peaked at 131,700 in December 1940, of whom 19,400 were women. The ARP service officially changed its title to Civil Defence in 1941, to reflect the wider range of roles then being undertaken. By 1944 full-time staff numbered 66,900, of whom 10,000 were women, with a further 799,400 men and 179,800 women serving as volunteers in their free time.

The main duties for ARP staff were as wardens, ambulance drivers, first aid parties and general duties - open to men and women; and for men only, work in decontamination, communications, and rescue and demolition. Youngsters, often Boy Scouts, were employed as messengers. Initially most wardens were men over the age of 30; they were allocated to urban wardens' posts, each post having around five wardens for every 4,000-5,000 local inhabitants.

Wardens were required to have good local knowledge, including location of shelters and utilities. In the event of an incident the local wardens would be the primary link with the other ARP services who

Civil Defence wardens from Gosport, Hampshire, parade proudly alongside their section vehicle - note the blackout masks over the headlights. A large Hampshire rose insignia is worn on the shoulder straps of the battledress (see right-hand man); the BD blouses are a mixture of ARP 57 and 57a (for 'austerity') patterns.

An interesting picture showing the red 'ARP' breast badge being worn on the battledress, unusually, by a woman member of a First Aid Party (note the 'FAP' stencilled on the helmet). By the time BD became general issue the yellow 'CD' badge was current, but the original badge was occasionally seen in use right through the war. Male BD did not fit too well on the female form, but the manufacture of BD cut for women was never authorized.



would attend as required. *Rescue and Demolition* parties would locate and recover casualties, shore up or demolish dangerous structures, and clear debris to allow access by fire and ambulance services. *First Aid Parties* would render aid to casualties (including anti-gas measures), and act as stretcher-bearers for the *Ambulance Drivers* who would deliver casualties to hospitals. If gas had been deployed the *Decontamination Squads* would decontaminate streets, vehicles and buildings. *Communications* personnel would man report centres, dealing with reports and requests from warden's posts and ensuring the correct allocation of available assets. *General duties*, normally for women aged over 18 and men over 45, included switchboard operators, stenographers, clerks, storekeepers and domestic workers.

At the outbreak of war the only uniform available was a duty brassard bearing the letters 'ARP', a civilian duty respirator and a steel helmet. Overalls 'ARP 41' were introduced by ARP circular 274 of 13 October 1939, with one million initially ordered at 11s (55p) a pair – a cost which caused some public concern among those who considered that the services of the ARP might never be needed. Eventually a black battledress-style uniform was issued to all men, with a smart four-pocket ATS-type tunic for women, along with a variety of other clothing from slacks to greatcoats.

By September 1944 Germany's ability to mount offensive operations against the civilian population had diminished to such a degree that a major reduction in Civil Defence services was implemented, and no further call-ups were made under the National Service Act. The CD services were wound up on 2 May 1945, holding their final victory parade in Hyde Park on 10 June 1945. The financial cost of providing civil defence in the period 1939–45 was £1,026,561,000. On a human level, CD staff casualties had amounted to about 3,808, of whom 1,355 were killed.

### Home Guard

In October 1939 Winston Churchill had proposed a 'second line defence force' made up of men over the age of 40 who were fit enough to defend the home front. It was anticipated that some 5 million men would protect key points such as bridges, rail terminals, and the long coastline. On 14 May 1940, prompted by the crisis on the Continent, the Secretary of War, Anthony Eden, made a radio broadcast urging men between the ages of 17 and 65 to volunteer for the new Local Defence Volunteers, which was to be a uniformed and armed force. The response was overwhelming: within 24 hours

over a quarter of a million men had volunteered. The title 'LDV' was short-lived; in July the now Prime Minister Churchill prompted the change to 'Home Guard'.

Units slowly became organized, though at first in civilian clothes and armed with whatever weapons could be found or borrowed; initially there was little administrative organization and no funds or matériel. American P17 rifles and Browning 'Machine Rifles' (BARs), both in the US .30-06 calibre, arrived from the USA in July 1940; often derided as antiques, they were in fact of newer patterns than the then standard SMLE in Regular service. A red band was often painted around the forestock to remind users of the different calibre from standard .303 ammunition. Canadian Ross rifles and Lewis guns were also issued, together with SMLEs as available, gradually supplemented by Thompson and later Sten sub-machine guns. Weapon security was not always what it should have been. (In 1942 the 16-year-old L/Cpl Frank Terrel had been issued a Sten gun to keep at home. The following year Frank was called up to serve with the Royal Marines, being 'demobbed' in 1947. Upon his return home his mother asked what he wished to do with the 'Tommy gun' he had left in the attic.)

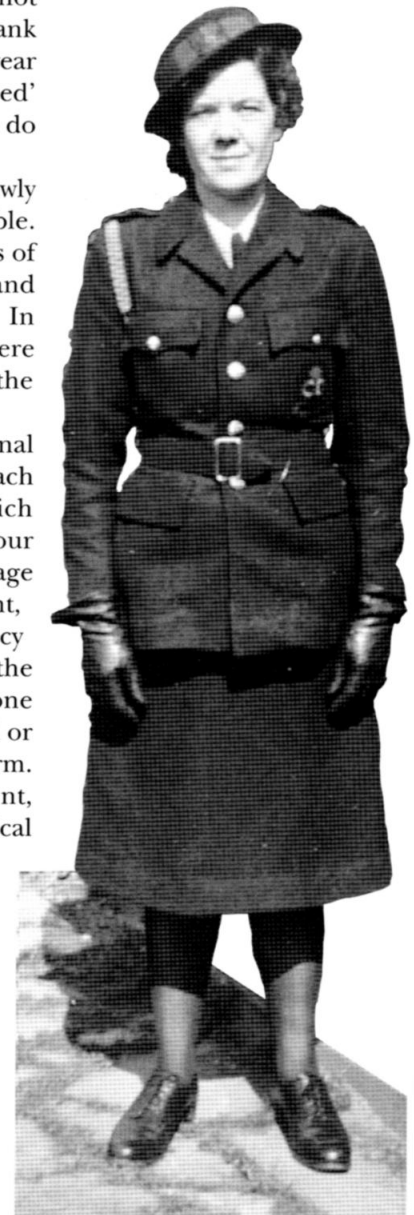
The first uniform was the 'Overalls, Denim', but this was slowly replaced with woollen 'Battledress, Serge' as stocks became available. A degree of pride was encouraged when, in early August 1940, units of the Home Guard were affiliated to their county regiments and authorized to wear regimental cap badges, where available. In February 1941 the old HG ranks (see commentary, Plate G1) were replaced with the Regular army rank system, with officers holding the King's Commission.

Home Guard structure was based upon the Army's seven regional commands, each command being sub-divided into HG areas. Each area was further divided into zones and groups, within which battalions were raised. A battalion had four companies of four platoons, each platoon having three sections. Although the average battalion numbered some 1,000 men there was no fixed establishment, and available manpower decided unit strengths. Upon emergency mustering (mobilization) the Home Guard were to come under the operational control of the Army. Typically, a section would work one duty night in five, their other nights being taken up with Fire Guard or Civil Defence duties, since many HG men also served in CD uniform. (While on duty some units would provide their men with refreshment, others would reimburse expenses, and some did neither. One typical HG section was provided with 1s 3d – about 6p – per night's duty for the purchase of sandwiches.)

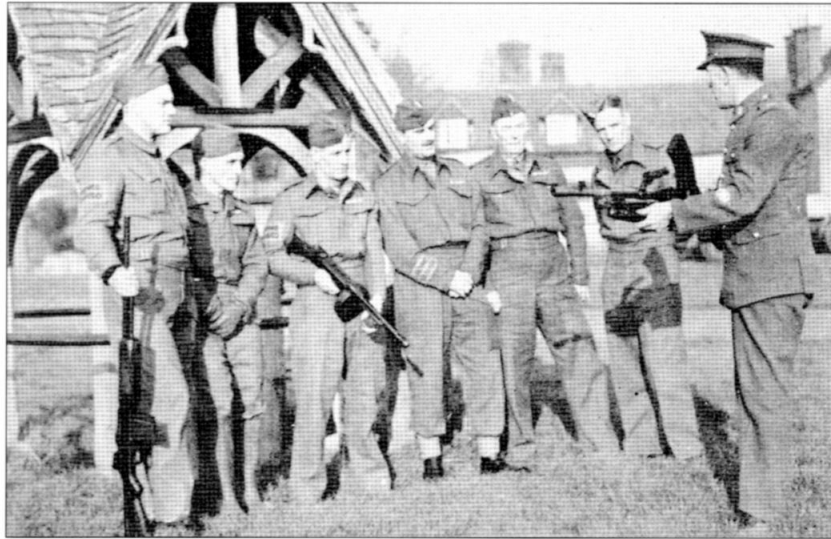
In 1942 the minimum age was lowered to 16. By the summer of 1943 the HG numbered 1,100 battalions; the average age was under 30 years, dispelling the myth of an old and infirm gentlemen's club. In reality the HG provided useful training for many young men pending their call-up to the Regular forces. Recruiting into the HG was temporarily suspended in October 1942, but later resumed.

In April 1943 the War Office withdrew its ban on women serving in the HG, although they had previously been authorized as helpers. From that date women were enrolled for non-combatant

A smart CD uniform consisting of the ARP 71 tunic with yellow breast badge and lanyard, ARP 72 skirt and ARP 44 felt hat, worn with white shirt and black tie. The shoes are the same black apron-fronted pattern as issued to the WAAF.



Home Guardsmen are instructed on the BAR, 'Tommy gun' and Bren. They have received an issue of 'Battledress, Serge' but have yet to acquire unit badges, and are therefore still wearing the HG armband, in a variety of ways. Medal ribbons from the Great War are worn by four of these soldiers. The cosy post-war image of 'Dad's Army' can be deceptive: while their chances against crack German assault units would never have been high, there can be little doubt that many veterans of the trenches would have made sure that they at least 'took one with them' if the enemy had landed.



administrative, domestic and medical duties. There was no issue of uniform, but a brooch-type badge was provided, and many units adopted a 'uniform' at their own expense. Initially called 'nominated women', their title was changed to Home Guard Auxiliaries the following year. A peak membership of 30,000 was achieved in 1944.

From 11 September 1944 the Home Guard was no longer required to report for duty, and was finally stood down in December 1944. Though never called upon to defend the nation against invaders, the HG nonetheless provided valuable service.

During the war 1,206 Home Guardsmen gave their lives, and a further 557 were injured.

### Auxiliary Fire Service & National Fire Service

Prior to the passing of the Fire Brigades Act 1938, no local authority other than London County Council was even obliged to run a fire brigade. Large cities often had several small units all acting independently, with the police force responsible for fire-fighting in many boroughs; for instance, in Portsmouth the police were responsible for the Portsmouth City Police Fire Brigade until August 1941, before which date all officers had been trained in fire-fighting.

This lack of cohesion was the single weakest link in the fire-fighting system during the Blitz, which exposed serious failures of co-ordination and reporting. Some fires remained unreported, while others were notified inaccurately. Often multiple reports for the same fire swamped the communications system and led to poor deployment of the limited 'pumps' (fire engines) available. At the height of the Blitz some Fire Report and Control Centres received between 50 and 60 reports of the same fire, with several units being deployed in duplication while other fires blazed unattended. Massed incendiary and bombing attacks left the firemen overwhelmed, and it became apparent that every able-bodied individual would be needed to play their part. For instance, the London night raids of 29/30 December 1940 left over 1,600 fires burning simultaneously – far in excess of the fire services' capabilities.

During the early stages of Home Guard recruitment the older veterans tended to dominate any gathering, but by 1943 the average age was under 30 – HG service was considered as good pre-military training for 16- and 17-year-old boys.



A group of Auxiliary Fire Service staff pose for a snapshot. At this stage of the war the 'Norfolk' tunic was still being worn by female personnel; and note the surprisingly loose cut of the slacks, at a time when every effort was made to save material. At right, a trailer pump is attached to a civilian vehicle; many family cars were purchased and, painted a uniform grey, served as fire pump tenders.

In anticipation of the need for extra firemen the Auxiliary Fire Service had been formed in 1938 to augment regional brigades in time of emergency, and by the outbreak of war there were over 5,000 AFS women alone serving in London. The start of heavy air raids quickly dispelled a previous public image of AFS volunteers being paid for very easy duties. Firemen and women were soon fighting vast numbers of blazes all over the country almost nightly, at the hazard of their lives. The confused chain of command that caused unnecessary difficulties and losses at the height of the Blitz was remedied to some extent by the decision taken in May 1941 to nationalize the fire services. It was to be that August before the local brigades and the AFS were combined to form the National Fire Service. An NFS training college was set up near Brighton to rationalize training and deployment methods, and to ensure that in future best use would be made of the available assets.

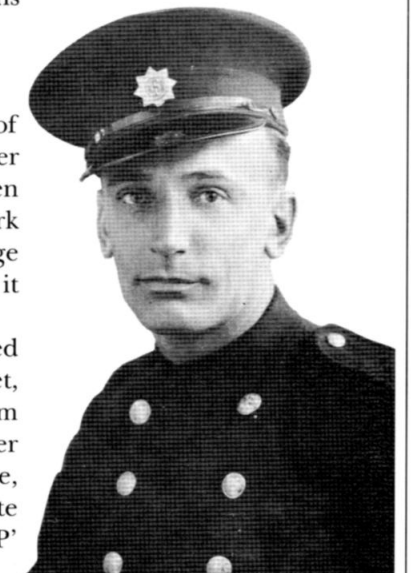
Before the end of the war the fire service was to suffer 1,027 deaths as a result of enemy action.

### Supplementary fire services

Early fire-watching provisions proved insufficient, and from the end of 1940 compulsory fire-watching duties were introduced for all men under the age of 63 years. In 1942 the scheme was extended to include women under 45, although some individuals were exempted by their war work and domestic responsibilities. Fire-watchers were placed at vantage points on factories, warehouses and other industrial premises, and it became illegal for such buildings to be left without such cover.

*Supplementary Fire Parties*, trained in basic fire-fighting and provided with rudimentary equipment – including a stirrup pump, sand bucket, special steel helmet and 'SFP' brassard – were being trained from early 1940. In August 1941 their efforts were reorganized and better co-ordinated as the *Fire Guard*. At first the CD services were responsible, but from April 1943 the Fire Guard were established as a separate service, still operating in small local parties (and often keeping 'SFP' insignia – see Plate C3).

This AFS fireman wears the standard 'mandarin' (standing) collar tunic in heavy wool serge, and a service cap with AFS badge. After the formation of the National Fire Service in August 1941 the NFS rank structure for men was from Chief Regional Fire Officer down to Fire Force Commander, Assistant Fire Force Commander, Divisional Officer, Column Officer, Senior Company Officer, Company Officer, Section Leader, Leading Fireman and Fireman.





AFS men wearing overalls don their belt kit, consisting of torch, fire axe and nozzle spanner. Note that the rubber Wellington boots ('gum boots') were a pooled item and as such have the sizes painted on the front. This unit apparently has yet to receive the woollen tunic and oilskins.

A stirrup pump cost the ARP 12s 6d (62.5p) in March 1938 when the first 50,000 were ordered; a further 50,000 were requested in 1939, soon followed by orders for another 79,000, and more were acquired as the war progressed. Manufacturers were soon offering stirrup pumps to the public at a cost of £1 each, with all householders being encouraged to obtain them for their own protection. Individual householders were also expected to master the procedures necessary to extinguish any incendiary that might fall on their home. It was hoped that a knowledgeable citizenry would be able to put out many of the small fires and report larger blazes, or fires in key locations, to the fire service.

The effectiveness of the new network was confirmed on a number of occasions when ordinary citizens, fire-watchers and SFPs/FGs were able to extinguish sufficient first-wave incendiaries to leave the second wave of Luftwaffe bombers with no markers. A typical example of the SFP's good work came during the 1941 Good Friday raid on Bristol, where the incendiaries were said to have been so rapidly extinguished that it was 'like someone pulling a blanket over them'. Although, coincidentally, incendiary attacks diminished after the formation of the FG, the 1942 'Baedeker raids' and the 'Little Blitz' of 1944 proved the effectiveness of the system. On 11 September 1944 it was announced that the Fire Guards would be stood down with effect from the following day. The north of England had received no major raids since 1942, and it was felt

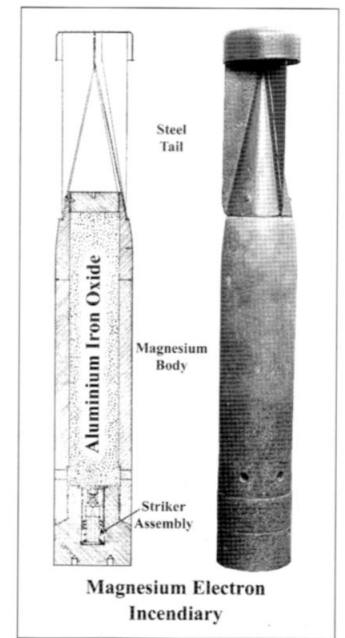
that the FG manhours could be better spent elsewhere; in London and the south-east FG duties continued, however, but only during the hours of darkness.

### Women's Voluntary Service

The WVS was formed in 1938 following a direct appeal by the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, to the Dowager Marchioness Reading. It was anticipated that the ARP would not have sufficient manpower to undertake all the tasks required, but that there would be a wealth of part-time voluntary labour available from those who, due to family or other commitments, were otherwise unable to commit to war work. The WVS recruited from the ranks of housewives and mothers as well as among the older and younger women who were keen to contribute to the war effort. From the outset the WVS was a civil defence organization, but the diversity of tasks which they undertook grew rapidly as the war progressed, until WVS women were to be found in a huge diversity of employment.

One of the early WVS commitments was to escort evacuees; members also staffed fixed and mobile canteens, knitted 'comforts' for the troops, made camouflage netting, and organized libraries. They worked with the Home Office, War Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry, Assistance Board, Board of Trade, Colonial Office, and the ministries of Home Security, Health, Agriculture, Aircraft Production, Education, Food, Information, Labour, Supply, War Transport and Works.

While the fires of the first air raids still raged the ladies in green were on the streets, evacuating the homeless and organizing accommodation, food, clothing and mobile laundries. Incident Enquiry Points were set up to gather information on casualties, and where necessary to assist the bereaved. In the spring of 1945 WVS members were sent to the Far East to serve under South-East Asia Command (SEAC) on troop welfare duties. Shortly after the end of hostilities against Japan the Home Office announced that the WVS should continue to undertake its duties for a further two years.



A German 1kg incendiary bomb, as dropped in hundreds of thousands during the opening stages of the Blitz; for instance, there were 30,652 recorded impacts on the city of Southampton alone. Public education and Fire Guard parties gradually reduced their effectiveness; upon detonation they burned vigorously, but isolated bombs were easily contained or extinguished by trained civilians. (HMSO/Author's collection)



Sisters in uniform: left, a member of the WRNS, and right, of the AFS. The latter wears the greatcoat (the AFS area title on the breast is cut off by the crop of the photo), and the popular private purchase Field Service cap in dark blue and red.

**Women's Voluntary Service** volunteers cooking up hot meals for bombed-out families. The WVS undertook a staggering variety of tasks in supporting the war effort, rightly warranting their later royal recognition.



The contribution made by the WVS is often overlooked in casual histories; but 241 members died on duty, and awards included five George Medals, two British Empire Medals and 78 Empire awards. The achievements of the WVS were to receive recognition from the Crown; now the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, they continue to serve in many walks of life.

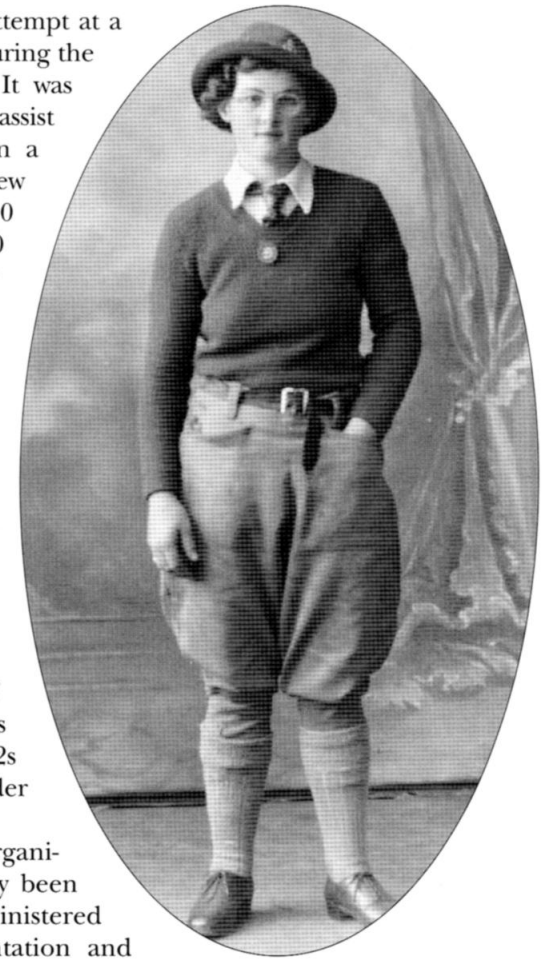
**Women's Land Army & Women's Timber Corps**

The WLA had first come into existence in 1917, but were disbanded soon after the Armistice. The inter-war years saw Britain's agriculture fall into decline, with as much as 70 per cent of food being imported. The looming

war reminded many of the effectiveness of Germany's attempt at a U-boat blockade and the subsequent shortages of food during the Great War, when many people suffered real hunger. It was planned to place 2 million acres under the plough; and to assist in this task the WLA was re-formed in June 1939 on a voluntary basis. Lady Gertrude Denman pioneered the new formation, and by the end of 1939 there were some 4,500 'Land Girls'; numbers soon rose, peaking at nearly 87,000 in 1943. The women were employed all over the country to ensure that food crops and farm animals would continue to feed the nation. They took part in every kind of work, and slightly built city girls from all backgrounds were to be seen undertaking the heavy labour of male farmhands. In the majority of employments WLA members produced up to 95 per cent of the output of men, and in some fields they exceeded it.

The work was hard, and leave was limited to one week per year. The smartly uniformed WLA was considered a mobile force and might be posted to any part of the country, although some girls were enrolled for local work only. The women were actually paid by the farmers who employed them, at rates fixed by the Board of Agriculture, but the conditions of service were as varied as the locations to which they were sent. Pay averaged £1 2s 6d (£1 12.5p) for a 48-hour week, although workers under 18 received considerably less.

From 1942 the *Women's Timber Corps* was a separate organization, formed to do forestry work that had previously been part of the WLA remit. The WTC continued to be administered by the WLA, who provided uniforms and documentation and carried out recruiting. The WLA girls swapped their felt hats and WLA badges for a green beret and red/brown plastic WTC badge, and became 'Lumber Jills'. They did a variety of work from felling to measuring up and sawing, and were grudgingly acknowledged as being as good as the men previously employed.



A fine studio portrait of a young WLA girl. The gold badge (below) had red and green backing to the crown and corn sheaf respectively.



LEFT A Fordson tractor turns the soil, skilfully operated by a pair of Women's Land Army girls.

The Southern Civil Defence Region's mobile kitchen – paid for by donations raised by Canadian citizens of Guelph, Ontario – provides refreshment to policemen and soldiers following a raid on Southampton. This south coast port was a key target for enemy bombers, and recorded over 2,631 HE bomb impacts in 67 different raids. These killed 630 civilians and injured another 1,906.



### Police

At the outbreak of war Britain's local county, city and borough police forces were numerous, and all autonomous in their command structure. Supporting the regular police in their work were the auxiliaries. The First Police Reserve were pensioned ex-police officers normally over the age of 55, who provided a general reserve for use in peace and war. The Police War Reserve, men of 25–55, undertook 12 hours' unpaid annual training but were to be called up as paid officers in time of war. Special Constables were unpaid volunteers who in their free time aided regular officers in time of peace or war.

In many places the 'Specials' were a vital part of the constabulary, undertaking many tasks as a greater number of regular officers were called into military service, and many Specials took on full-time police employment. (In the little village of South Molton, Special Constable James Brayley had quite a busy war; on more than one occasion he was to round up downed Luftwaffe aircrew, and in 1944 he swapped directing local tractors and bicycles for controlling vast convoys of Sherman tanks and other vehicles during the build-up to D-Day.) The Specials considered themselves of more use to the war effort than the Home Guard who, unlike the police, would 'take anyone who could tie his own bootlaces'. Regular police strength nationwide reached 64,900 in 1941, including 400 female officers, supplemented by 39,500 male auxiliary officers on full-time service and 160,500 part-time auxiliaries.

The *Women's Auxiliary Police Corps* had been set up by the Home Office in 1939, prior to which time as few as 200 female officers had been employed full-time by the police forces. The WAPC was not to undertake normal policing duties but to act in auxiliary roles such as clerks, drivers and telephonists. By 1941 there were 300 full-time and 700 part-time WAPCs; of the latter more than 60 had been attested and were assisting the 400 or so regular policewomen in their duties. At its peak there were 5,000 full-time WAPC officers, as many as 500 of them

attested and undertaking police roles rather than auxiliary work; there were also as many as 2,000 part-time WAPCs.

### Royal Observer Corps

The Observer Corps was formed in October 1925, with the establishment of 44 observer posts and two operation centres tasked with plotting aircraft movement over Britain. About 300 men were enrolled as Special Constables, specifically for duty as observers and with no policing role. The Munich crisis prompted a temporary mobilization of the OC; although this lasted only for a few days, it highlighted a number of deficiencies, particularly in the shelter and heating provided at isolated posts.

The OC was mobilized for the second time on 24 August 1939. Terms of service were changed, and two classes of observers were drawn from the Specials: Class A were full-time staff, Class B part-timers, both classes being paid at the same rate – being paid cost them their status as volunteer Special Constabulary. The service provided by the corps during the Battle of Britain brought official recognition, and from 9 April 1941 they became the Royal Observer Corps.

Acute manpower shortages eventually overcame the prejudices of the all-male corps, and in July 1941 women were finally enrolled; initially working only in the plotting rooms, women were later employed as spotters. In 1942 the ROC underwent a major reorganization; it then numbered 4,000 full-time and 30,000 part-time observers, including 650 women – the latter figure rising to 2,700 in 1943. The end of the war in Europe diminished the requirement for observers, and the ROC was stood down on 12 May 1945.

### NAAFI & ENSA

Within Britain the supply of provisions and necessities for sale to members of the armed forces was administered by the Navy Army Air Force Institute, formed in 1921 as the official trading organization of the services. While serving at home NAAFI staff were civilians, but if sent overseas on active service they were enlisted for duty with the armed forces; uniformed and armed, they were considered full members of the military. For active duty the military members of the NAAFI were attached to the Naval Canteen Service (members not being enlisted into the Royal Navy until 1942), Royal Army Service Corps/EFI (Expeditionary Forces Institute) or the Auxiliary Territorial Service/EFI. Having returned from foreign service, and while at home, they normally reverted to civilian NAAFI status.



Two female plotters from the Royal Observer Corps report on approaching enemy aircraft (see Plate E); the ROC breast badge was in light blue on midnight blue, as were sleeve rank badges. A network of posts across the country enabled aircraft to be identified and tracked, allowing possible targets and AA batteries to be warned of impending attack and giving RAF fighters an opportunity to intercept.

In 1939 NAAFI staff numbered some 8,000, working in 720 establishments in Britain and a further 359 overseas. The NCS operated a further 266 canteens on ships and at shore establishments. By the end of the war the NAAFI strength had risen to 110,000 staff, with over 5,443 establishments in Britain alone.

One of the NAAFI's secondary commitments was to provide entertainment for the troops, including concerts and cinema shows. These complex needs led to the formation, as a sub-branch of the NAAFI, of the ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association), mobilized on 5 September 1939. Personalities from all spheres of the entertainment world were eligible to volunteer their services to ENSA, for concerts at home and overseas. The first concert was given on 9 September, and soon afterwards servicemen worldwide were being treated to visits by concert parties and mobile cinemas. ENSA concerts were also organized at major factories to raise the morale of the workers, often young women conscripted to work many miles from home. Alongside ENSA, military bands and civilian organizations such as the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA – formed in 1940) also provided music, concerts and films shows for factory workers. By the end of the war ENSA had entertained audiences totalling more than 500 million service personnel and war workers with 2,500,000 shows.

### Women's Legion

The WL owed its existence to the surge of enthusiasm that swept the nation in 1914. Formed to provide assistance to the troops, it consisted of three sections, one civil and two 'military'; the latter were a cookery section and a motor transport section. The cookery section became part of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps following its formation in 1917, while the MT section was attached to the Royal Army Service Corps. The WL became inactive after the Armistice, but 1934 saw a resurgence of interest and plans were made for rebuilding the Legion. At the outbreak of war the younger members of the WL were directed to join the ATS or other services, which the vast majority did; meanwhile the Legion opened a recruiting campaign to attract older ladies not otherwise suited to full-time military service.

The WL undertook a number of tasks during the war: drivers who owned their own vehicles assisted in many aspects of transportation, including evacuation, while the canteen service did sterling work during the Blitz. On 15 September 1940, Acting Commandant Mrs Noel and three other WL officers were killed by enemy action while on duty at Bermondsey Town Hall. Unlike many of the voluntary organizations, WL members were paid 10s (50p) a day for their services, whether full or part time. Their rank structure comprised officers – Director, Commandant, Deputy Commandant, Assistant Commander, Company Commander, Company Leader and Company Assistant; and NCOs – Senior Leader, Section Leader and Assistant Section Leader.

### Women's Transport Service (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry)

The FANY was formed in 1907 following the South African War, when many wounded had died needlessly through lack of immediate aid.

OPPOSITE **Motor Transport Corps drivers offload food supplies; they are attached to the American Ambulance Great Britain, driving vehicles supplied by American subscriptions – note the AAGB sleeve badges showing crossed US and British flags. Originally volunteers but conscripted from 1940, these women received an intensive three-week training course in vehicle maintenance, map reading, driving skills and first aid, and further training and promotional courses were attended as required. See Plate F1; the left hand woman of this pair still wears the original ski-type cap. MTC ranks were as follows (with ATS equivalents): Driver (private), Cadet Officer (lance-corporal), Section Cadet Officer (corporal), Company Cadet Officer (sergeant), Ensign (second subaltern), Lieutenant (subaltern), Captain (junior commander), Commander (senior commander), Commandant (chief commander), Senior Commandant (deputy controller), Corps Commandant (chief controller).**

The FANY trained as mounted auxiliaries, skilled in first aid and horsemanship, and able to assist the RAMC in rapid assistance to the wounded over rough ground; a number were also qualified as nurses. During the Great War the FANY provided trained hospital staff and ambulance drivers, working with the French and Belgian as well as the British forces. Unlike many wartime organizations the FANY did not disband after the war, but continued as an emergency organization. Its services were called upon in 1926, when the FANY provided drivers for the War Office and Great Scotland Yard during the General Strike, being added to the Army's Emergency Transport Service. The contribution of the FANY was acknowledged in 1927 when the service appeared in the official Army List – as it continues to do.

A change of name in 1936 saw the FANY re-titled the Women's Transport Service (FANY), and the service grew rapidly in the immediate pre-war years. In September 1938 the driving section of the WTS transferred en masse to form the new ATS driver companies. The WTS remained in existence, providing drivers to the Polish Army in Britain, the British Red Cross and a number of overseas organizations; these remaining members not transferred to the ATS termed themselves the 'Free FANY'. WTS (FANY) ranks were as for the Army, except for Driver (private), Ensign (second lieutenant), Commander (major), Staff Commander (lieutenant-colonel) and Commandant (colonel).

The service also provided a military identity for women secret agents of the Special Operations Executive; 73 members of the WTS parachuted into occupied territories, where some were captured, brutally interrogated and executed – seven of the 22 women working in France gave their lives.





At the end of the war provision was made for the British wives of US servicemen to be shipped back to the States; here a US officer checks the identity papers of a group of smiling war brides boarding buses that will take them to a harbour for embarkation. Despite clothes rationing the ladies are all very well presented.

brought the MTC official recognition from the Ministry of War Transport, its members being conscripted and receiving pay. By early 1943 the corps had some 3,000 members.

#### Air Transport Auxiliary

The ATA was formed in September 1939 and was at first managed and run by the British Overseas Airways Corporation. It was manned by pilots who were ineligible for flying service with the RAF, but were fit to fly in the role of ferry pilots, delivering aircraft from factories to service airfields. Training consisted of specialist conversion courses which qualified members to fly a range of military aircraft, from basic trainers to the latest fighters and heavy bombers. The ATA was first opened to women pilots in 1940 due to the shortage of qualified men; they joined under the same terms as men, and were graded on their flying ability. From the first batch of only eight adventurous women this group

#### Motor Transport Corps

The Mechanised Transport Training Corps was founded in 1939 by Mrs G.M.Cook CBE, as a voluntary civilian organization for women who, due to family or other commitments, were unable to offer their services to the full-time women's auxiliary services. Working for the Ministry of Transport, the MTTC provided drivers for military and government departments. In December 1939 the French government accepted an offer of assistance by members of the MTTC; four units were deployed with a total of 130 members, two of whom were captured by the Germans when France fell. In Britain, drivers worked for various departments including the ministries of Health, Agriculture, Information and Supply. Others volunteered for overseas service, serving in a number of locations including Kenya, Egypt, Algeria, Italy and France. The title was officially changed to Motor Transport Corps in 1940. The arrival of conscription

increased to 49 by August 1941; by 1944 there were 100 women pilots – 20 per cent of total ATA pilot strength. In addition to flying duties over 2,000 personnel were employed as ground staff, 900 of these being women working as office staff, trainers, and in maintenance. In all 129 ATA pilots were to die in service, 15 of them women (including the famous pre-war aviatrix Amy Johnson). The service delivered 308,567 aircraft with a meritable loss rate of only 0.39 per cent. (For ranks and insignia, see commentary to Plate E3.)

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GI babies: the children of American servicemen and their British wives head for the USA in the autumn of 1945. Before victory brought the U-boat threat to an end, transatlantic voyages – for the few civilians who could afford them – had been haunted by the memory of tragic losses such as the *City of Benares* in September 1940.

## THE PLATES

### A1: Rescue Party member, Air Raid Precautions; Portsmouth, 1940

He wears the ARP 41 overalls (with a white left shoulder lanyard), together with a mask and extension hose (bellows type smoke apparatus) based on the service respirator. This was not standard issue but one of the many items available to specialists. The normal issue for a warden's post consisted of light anti-gas suits, gloves, eyeshields, helmet curtains and rubber boots, the quantity dictated by staff numbers and location; an incident reporting notebook, three each torches and whistles, two hand rattles (gas alarm), a hand bell (gas all clear), and a first aid kit.

### A2: ARP driver; Coventry, 1941

Despite the initial reluctance to spend cash on clothing for the ARP services, a full set of items was eventually formulated and issued depending on the user's role. This driver wears the ARP 43 lightweight cotton drill coat and the ARP 45 driver's peaked cap. By mid-war the typical personal issue provided for the basic needs of ARP staff. Female issue consisted of tunic, skirt or slacks (depending on employment), greatcoat, pair of shoes, waterproof, steel helmet, civilian duty respirator (service respirator in some roles), anti-gas eyeshields, anti-gas ointment and whistle. An 'ARP' brassard could be carried off-duty when in civilian clothes, and donned if personnel were needed to assist the local services at short notice. Despite the ARP's name



change to Civil Defence, all uniform items continued to carry the 'ARP' prefix in their cataloguing and description.

### A3: Firewoman, Auxiliary Fire Service; London, 1941

The 'Norfolk'-cut jacket was worn by many women's organizations, including Army nurses and the Red Cross. Early issues to the AFS were poorly fitted, a problem not really overcome until the provision of the CD/ARP four-pocket tunic (see Plate D2). AFS women also received an issue of slacks and a double-breasted winter overcoat. A blue and red field service (FS) cap was available for private purchase, worn in lieu of the ski-type cap, and became very popular.

**Inset** All AFS ranks wore a district badge on the tunic, displaying 'AFS' above the name of the district, in this case London. With the formation of the National Fire Service in 1941 the badge was changed to omit the area title, showing instead the regional number below 'NFS'.

### B1: Volunteer, Women's Voluntary Service; London, 1940

### B2: Evacuee child; Home Counties, 1940

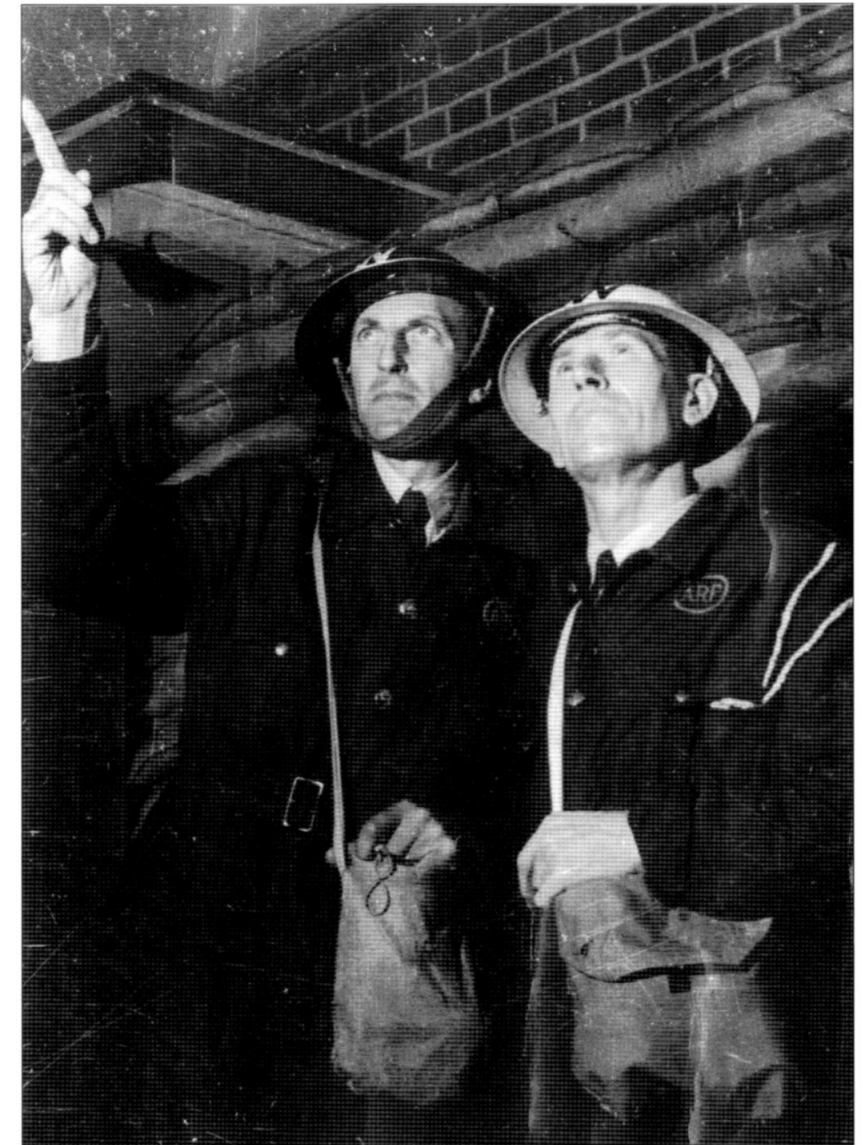
The WVS were readily identified by their green uniforms and red blouses, which could be supplemented by an overcoat, this scarf, and working dress – all bought at the volunteer's expense. The ubiquitous gasmask is carried in a privately purchased leather case; retailing at between 1s and 1s 11d,

**This Air Raid Precautions warden wears the ARP 41 overalls (see Plate A1) with white metal 'ARP' buttons; he has added yellow-on-midnight-blue 'Report & Control' titles to each shoulder.**

**OPPOSITE** The black 'MO' on the helmet – bottom left – and yellow 'MOH' (Medical Officer of Health) shoulder title identify this man as a Civil Defence medical officer, ranking with chief warden; note the yellow bars high on his sleeve, and see Plate D3. At first there were no standard insignia of ARP/CD grade. CD grades and insignia were officially standardized from September 1941, but throughout the war there was much variation, depending upon both local practices and the person's function within the various branches.

Rank was supposed to be indicated by yellow-on-midnight-blue bars (2 1/2in x 1/4 or 3/4in) and chevrons: Controller (2 narrow over 1 broad bar), Chief Warden (1 narrow over 1 broad), Deputy Chief Warden (1 broad), Divisional Warden (3 narrow); Head or Post Warden (3 chevrons, sometimes beneath a star), Senior Warden (1 or 2 chevrons).

**RIGHT** Outside a sandbagged ARP post a warden and a chief warden (in white helmet) observe the night sky. Both wear the ARP 41 overalls introduced by ARP circular 274 in October 1939, with the red left breast badge, 'ARP' in an oval border.



these were much superior to the issue cardboard box. Much of the logistics of evacuation was undertaken by the WVS, accompanying evacuee trains and comforting children, though this boy seems to be unconcerned by the pandemonium that often accompanied such scenes. Note his name and address labels, and boxed gas mask.

### B3: Civilian gas masks, 1939

The fear of poison gas, based on the memory of its use in the Great War, led to much effort and research. Although gas is difficult to deploy in any quantity and is easily dispersed by wind and rain, it could nevertheless have disrupted cities severely if released in built-up areas. The psychological impact of any widespread use of gas was considered to be a great threat, and would certainly have provoked a British escalation of the war in reprisal. This lady wears the civilian issue gas mask with its original filter assembly; this was soon judged inadequate, and a new bright green filter was securely taped to the old canister's front. The babies are

secure in their gas hoods ('baby bags'); these required the parent to operate the filter pump continuously in order to maintain over-pressure. A figure of 1,400,000 hoods was budgeted for in January 1939, at a cost of £1 each; once the bag was outgrown the infant would be issued a 'Mickey Mouse' mask, with a red facepiece and blue filter, at a cost of 3s 6d to the government.

**Inset** The WVS wore a small enamel and chrome cap badge. Initially this bore 'ARP'/'Women's Voluntary Services', but from February 1939 the badge was changed to read 'WVS'/'Civil Defence'. Note B1's small neck brooch, and the cloth version above her sleeve title 'London'.

### C1: 'Land girl', Women's Land Army; West Country, 1943

The overcoat, issued from 1942 for wear over standard WLA uniform, bears red-on-green titles. On joining the WLA each woman received an issue of 2 green jerseys, 2 pairs of

breeches, 2 overall coats, 2 pairs of dungarees, 6 pairs of stockings, 3 shirts, 2 towels; one pair each of ankle boots, shoes, 'gum boots' or boots and leggings; a hat and enamelled metal cap badge, an overcoat and shoulder titles, an oilskin or mackintosh, an oilskin sou'wester, and a WLA brassard. The basic armet was green with a red crown; a half-diamond badge was added for each six months' service up to two years. After two years' service a new brassard with red border and two embroidered diamonds was issued, a further four half-diamonds being applied to this before a scarlet brassard was issued after four years' service.

**C2: 'Lumber Jill', Women's Timber Corps; East Anglia, 1945**

The uniform was that of the WLA, the WTC's parent organization. It differed only in the substitution of a green beret and distinctive WTC cap badge (a green beret was also issued later to the WLA). While the WLA undertook all types of work associated with farming, the WTC were only employed on forestry work.

**C3: Fire Guard 'No.2'; South-East England, 1944**

Stirrup pumps were allocated one per 30 houses or 150 yards of street. A pump team consisted of the 'No.1', who carried a torch, an ARP 55 axe and a whistle; the 'No.2' carried the pump, and the 'No.3' two water buckets, one used as a reservoir for the pump and the second for transporting water. Each member of the FG was supplied with a duty armet (ARP 39) and a special high-domed steel helmet with visible lacing for the liner; note grey paint finish with black 'SFP' (Supplementary Fire Party), and blackened steel 'goggles'. Again, she has a private purchase



gas mask bag. A team could pump 1.5 gallons of water a minute, but it took up to 6 gallons to extinguish a single incendiary bomb.

**Inset** The badge of the Women's Timber Corps was only produced in a red/brown plastic economy version.

**D1: Leading Fireman, National Fire Service; Essex, 1943**

Wearing a heavy wool jacket and oilskin over-trousers, this fireman is from 11 Fire Force (Essex) – note 'NFS/11' breast badge. The khaki steel helmet has an anti-gas curtain, partly hiding the NFS insignia and the red band of a Leading Fireman (white for Leading Firewomen); fire service ranks were denoted by helmet markings and shoulder bars. On his web belt he carries an axe, a nozzle spanner and a 'belt line' or general purpose cord.

**D2: Driver, Civil Defence; Gosport, 1944**

This smartly presented CD driver wears the ARP 71 tunic; this was also labelled as NFS 81 – some of the same uniform items were issued to both NFS and CD services, including women's blouses, slacks (ARP 73), skirts (ARP 72) and battledress. This driver wears the ARP 68 beret with ARP 98 Civil Defence beret badge. For women the ARP 44 felt hat could also be worn; some provided themselves with black FS caps bearing the CD badge, or continued wearing the silver ARP badge. Note her yellow lanyard, and Army-style service chevrons and wound strip on the forearms.

**D3: Chief Warden, Civil Defence; Cambridge, 1944**

CD rank status was indicated by sleeve badges, as well as high visibility helmet markings that also indicated the wearer's duty. The rank of Chief Warden is shown on the sleeve by a narrow bar over a broad bar, and more visibly by the 'W' and two black bars on the white-painted Mk II helmet. Uniform consists of the Blouse, ARP 57 and Trousers, Austerity 58a. Those employed in heavy work were provided with a harder wearing uniform of the same cut – the Blouse, Rescue Service ARP 59, and Trousers, Rescue Service ARP 60.

**Inset** A white metal badge was issued to all ARP staff. It was replaced by a cloth Civil Defence badge upon the renaming of the service, but continued in general use until the end of the war.

**E1: Chief Observer, Royal Observer Corps; Kent, 1943**

**E2: Woman Observer, Royal Observer Corps; Sussex, 1944**

The uniform of the ROC owed much to that used by the RAF and WAAF; a battledress uniform and midnight-blue beret,

**A woman member of the National Fire Service wears the disliked ski-type cap and the NFS 81 tunic; the area badge on the breast pocket identifies 11 (Essex) Fire Force – see Plate D1.**

**For women the ranks published under Regulation 6 (2), NFS General Regulations of 5 August 1941 were Senior Area Officer, Area Officer, Group Officer, Assistant Group Officer, Leading Firewoman and Firewoman. The rank of Senior Area Officer was later abolished and four new ranks added: Chief Woman Fire Officer, Regional Woman Fire Officer, Assistant Area Officer and Senior Leading Firewoman.**



with additional wet and cold weather clothing issued as needed. This team are shown as if manning the most vital item in the ROC arsenal: a plotting table with Micklethwait height-correction attachment that gave the altitude and bearing of approaching enemy aircraft, binoculars being used to identify numbers and aircraft type. Note E1's sleeve rank badge, World War I ribbons and RFC observer's wing.

**E3: First Officer, Air Transport Auxiliary; Hamble, 1944**

The dark blue uniform of the ATA was very smart; those employed often had private income and could afford the best. Male and female uniform was similar, but women preferred to use the FS cap rather than the peaked cap worn by men. Slacks were better suited to the job than skirts, which

**Fireman Harold Davies, a member of the standing fire service at the Royal Ordnance Factory, Hereford. In May 1944 a bomb caught fire and exploded at the ROF, threatening to ignite over 1,000 tons of explosives and armaments. For his part in fighting this fire Davies was awarded the George Medal for valour. Regular fire service clothing of heavy wool jacket and oilskin over-trousers are worn, but the Mk II helmet has been modified with the addition of a 'comb' to the crown. On his back is the 'knapsack tank' for foam compound.**

were seldom seen. The service dress was often worn when flying, although RAF flying clothing and parachutes were worn as required. ATA rank insignia were shoulder stripes:

Third Officer (one broad), Second Officer (one broad, one narrow), First Officer (two broad), Flight Captain (one narrow between two broad), Commander (three broad), Senior Commander (four broad).

**Inset** The badge of the ROC shows an Elizabethan coast-watcher waiting to light a beacon to signal the approach of the Spanish Armada.

**F1: Driver, Motor Transport Corps; London, 1943**

Her sleeve titles and left arm badge identify this driver as 'M.T.C.' working for the Ministry of Supply Car Service, providing general transport for senior MoS staff as well as undertaking courier duties. Both the service dress cuffs and FS cap have the MTC's light blue piping. She wears the driver's belt, similar to the male Sam Browne but without the fittings for the sword and braces. A ski-type cap was also worn by the MTC (see page 55), but this FS cap became increasingly popular; it was easily stowed away, and needed much less maintenance.

**F2: Canteen worker, Navy Army Air Force Institute; Catterick, 1943**

The standard uniform of the NAAFI girls was the canteen overall, though for more formal wear or 'walking out' a khaki service dress was worn. Of the same 'Norfolk' cut as the nurses' and fire services uniforms, it was worn with a broad-brimmed hat similar to that of the Land Army. Bronze NAAFI insignia were worn on the collar and cap, but tunic buttons were of plain leather 'football' style. The hat was supplemented by an FS cap, and later replaced with a more practical beret.

**F3: Driver, First Aid Nursing Yeomanry; London, 1944**

This 'Free FANY' driver wears the austerity pattern of service dress uniform with Sam Browne belt. The practical beret, with a burgundy backing to the FANY badge, replaced the old ATS-style cap; that had been worn with the chinstrap over the crown rather than to the front, a practice carried over into the ATS by WTS/FANY drivers transferred in 1938. (Parachute wings on the FANY uniform would have subtly identified the wearer as a trained Special Operations Executive agent rather than simply a driver.)

'Battledress, Serge' of June 1940 manufacture, worn by L/Cpl Edward Reeves of D Coy, 17th Sussex Bn, Home Guard - compare with Plate G2. 'Home Guard' titles are in faded off-white thread on khaki serge, and county and battalion designations 'SX/17' in black printing on khaki drill. The unofficial patch of 'D for Dog' Company is painted in black, white and red on a very pale blue oval with a yellow rim. The four service chevrons are red printed on khaki drill; and note the red diamond proficiency badge just visible on the left forearm. (Courtesy Tom Reeves)

**Inset** The original MTTC badge consisted of two spanners upon a wheel, with the letters 'M', 'T', 'T', 'C' at the four points of the spanners. When the title of the corps changed to MTC in 1940 the badge remained the same but with one of the 'Ts' deleted. The same size device was worn on both collar points and on the cap.

**G1: Platoon Commander, Local Defence Volunteers, July 1940**

Following the initial call for volunteers most men paraded in civilian clothing with, at best, an 'LDV' brassard. Gradually the issue of denim overalls and FS caps provided some uniformity, but often the kit was either too small or too large, being the sizes the Regulars did not require. This LDV officer wears a set of issue denims with a Sam Browne belt and holstered service revolver - a souvenir of his service in the Great War. The cap bears no badge, none having been authorized at this time. Initially LDV/HG officer rank was sometimes indicated by dark blue stripes across the shoulder straps: Zone Commander (one broad), Group Commander (four narrow), Battalion Commander (three narrow), Company Commander (two narrow), and Platoon Commander (one narrow). NCO ranks were marked by the usual Army sleeve chevrons: Section Commander (three) and Squad Commander (two).



**G2: Corporal, Home Guard; Dorset, 1943**

This guardsman is typical of the young men serving in the HG prior to being called up for regular service. He wears Battledress, Serge with HG issue equipment, consisting of 03 pattern (utility) belt, HG pouches, web braces, and HG haversack. A leather waterbottle carrier with integral sling was also issued, later produced in webbing. The weapon is the American .30-06 Browning Automatic Rifle. By 1943 the uniform and equipment shortages had been almost overcome, BD replacing denims and obsolete weapons sometimes being replaced with Stens.

**G3: Home Guard Auxiliary; Sussex, 1944**

Although women were not allowed to serve in the HG, so many did so on an unofficial basis that official approval for an auxiliary unit was eventually granted. There was no provision for uniform, although a brooch-type badge was authorized. Most HG units encouraged their auxiliaries to adopt a uniform, typically a khaki shirt and skirt with an FS cap. The women wore what was available, but the majority did manage a degree of military colour in the clothing worn, if not always of a military cut. This young lady proudly wears 'Home Guard' shoulder titles on her blouse, and her FS cap bears the HGA badge.

**Inset** In keeping with austerity measures the brooch issued to HG Auxiliaries was made of gold-coloured plastic. It was worn on a khaki FS cap of standard Army pattern.

**H1: Police Constable**

Undertaking traffic duty during a gas exercise, this constable wears a Mk II helmet painted dark blue with white lettering, his 'duty' cuff band, and a service respirator. The two- (or four-) man Consol shelters, often placed at railway stations, gave some protection from bomb fragments for police and wardens whose duties prevented them sheltering elsewhere. (The lettering shown is from photos of early trials.)

**H2: Auxiliary, Women's Auxiliary Police Corps**

The uniform of the WAPC owed much to the style of that worn by the ATS, with an identical cap. Field service caps were also available by private purchase and were often worn by WAPC ranks when not on official duties. She carries a suitably marked helmet painted a lighter blue than that of her male colleague, and a respirator.

**H3: Munitions worker, Royal Ordnance Factory; Birmingham, 1945**

This ROF worker wears the standard 'bluette' uniform that superseded a number of overall and coat-type working clothes. The cap has a netting crown and neck flap. Employed in the manufacture of munitions, she carries an HE shell for the 25-pdr gun. Many women, including members of the ATS, were employed in such work, which was often dangerous.

**H4: CD First Aid Party member; Midlands, 1944**

The 'civilian duty respirator' was issued to the civil defence services who needed something harder-wearing than the standard civilian respirator, but less expensive than the

service respirator that was on limited issue to specialist CD units and police officers. In 1939 it was estimated that the ARP would require 1,300,000 civilian duty respirators, a figure that was to increase. The respirator was carried in a hessian haversack, early patterns having a lace tie but later models a button-down flap. The filter had a quick-release mechanism allowing expired filters to be replaced rapidly when working in heavily contaminated environments. It is worn here by a member of a First Aid Party, as shown by the 'FAP' marking on the Mk II helmet and the shoulder title on the ARP 57a austerity blouse.



This female CD warden raises a cheery smile while demonstrating the light anti-gas suit. Fortunately, despite much training and expense, civilian anti-gas skills and equipment were never needed. The 'civilian duty respirator', in its hessian bag, is worn here on the left hip.

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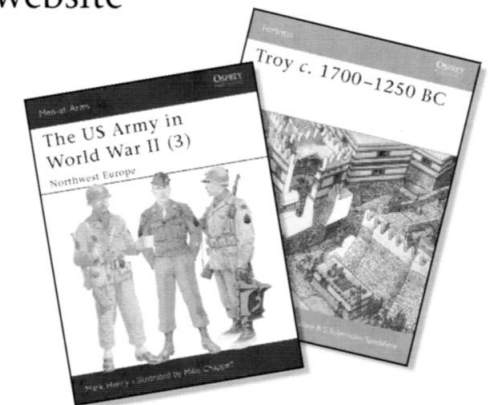
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