

# Elmbridge Museum

## World War 2 Teacher's notes



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## Civil Defence Workers and the Home Guard

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## Air Raids and Gas Attacks

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## Propaganda and Emergency Measures

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## Air Raid Precautions Badge



These badges were worn by members of the following Air Raid Precaution (ARP) services:

- First aid and medical services,
- Rescue and Demolition services
- Decontamination services
- Air Raid Wardens
- Gas Detection Officers

These services were up after 1937 when the government instructed councils to make preparations for war.

ARP wardens had an important role to play during the war. They were responsible for alerting the public to an air raid. Along with the police they took up the warning provided by a siren by blowing a whistle. When the raid was over the wardens sometimes rang their hand bells as a signal if the siren had been damaged. Their other duties included assessing the amount of damage done during an air raid and reporting it, testing gas masks and advising people how to protect their homes. They patrolled the streets enforcing the blackout and would sometimes put out small fires.

At first the ARP wardens were civilians in Civil Defence and so were not issued with a uniform. Instead they wore this badge, an armband and a steel helmet. Later they were issued with navy blue boiler suits.

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## Air Raid Rattle



The air raid rattle was designed to warn people of gas attacks; however no gas attacks took place in Great Britain during World War 2.

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## Air Raid Warden's Helmet



This steel helmet, known as a tin hat, was standard issue to both troops in the war and to anyone in the emergency services. It was essentially the same style as had been worn by the troops during World War I. For those on military services the helmet was painted a different colour according to where in the world the soldier was serving. At home the helmets of civil defence workers were painted with different letters according to the particular branch they served in; "+" for First Aid workers, "AFS" for the Auxiliary Fire Service, "P" for the Police etc. This helmet has a "W", showing it belonged to an ARP warden.

ARP wardens became a familiar sight during the war, with their heavy duty respirators, steel helmets and, from 1942, their blue boiler suits. The helmet and respirator were necessary protection as wardens had to ensure everyone was safely inside during a raid and were first out to assess any damage.

Wardens worked in groups based at one particular post. Each post had responsibility for approximately 500 people. The posts contained a telephone, a map of the district, a camp bed, table and tea-making equipment. Wardens were on a rota. They worked for 8 hours, were on call for a further 8 hours and were off duty for the last 8 hours. Many ARP wardens were volunteers and used their 8 hours off duty to work, but for some the ARP was their main source of income. Men were paid £3 a week and women £2 a week if they were fulltime wardens. One in six ARP wardens was a woman.

# Elmbridge Museum ARP Warden's Whistle



Every ARP warden was assigned a whistle. The whistles are the same design as the standard police whistle, and emit a piercing sound which can be heard over a mile away. Every whistle is engraved with the initials "A.R.P." and the address of the manufacturer, J. Hudson and Co.

The whistles were originally intended to warn members of the public of an approaching air raid. In 1941 it was decided that the whistle would also indicate the fall of incendiary devices.

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# Elmbridge Museum Fire Guard Armband



The Fire Guard was formed during the Blitz to reduce damage caused by fire. When the Blitz began, many office buildings were left unattended during bombing raids, allowing incendiary devices to start fires that could have been put out if they had been responded to sooner. To tackle this issue the government introduced a compulsory Fire Guards Scheme, to ensure buildings were monitored 24 hours a day. Men (aged 16-30) and women (aged 20-45) could be called up, although volunteers were also accepted.

Fire Guards would keep watch over buildings and put out incendiary devices by picking them up with a special scoop and putting them in a bucket of sand. If they were faced with a larger fire, they would raise the alarm. Fire Guards did not receive an official uniform, but they were provided with an armband to show their role. Being a Fire Guard was not a very popular job - they had to endure long, cold nights outside and the job was often very tedious.

# Elmbridge Museum Gas Masks



Gas masks started to be issued well before the outbreak of World War II. On 26<sup>th</sup> September 1938, during the Munich Crisis, the Home Office send a telegraph to every council instructing them to start giving out gas masks; this respirator was issued by Walton and Weybridge Council which had ordered 30,000 gas masks. Across the country 30 million were issued.

From August 1939 everyone had to carry their gas mask with them at all times. Restaurants and other entertainment venues were known to refuse admission if people without their gas mask. Children had to take theirs to school where they placed them on their desks.

There was a real fear that poisonous gases, which had been used on troops in World War I, would be used by the Germans on the British civilian population. Thankfully this never actually happened as the masks probably would have offered little protection. The absence of gas attacks was mostly due to German fears of retaliation and they issued gas masks to their own population.

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## Shrapnel



Shrapnel is the collective term for fragments of a bomb, shell or other object thrown out by an explosion. Collecting shrapnel was a great wartime hobby for children during the war.

The shrapnel pictured above was collected on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April 1941 from Station Path and Ranworth Crossworth in Walton. It is believed to come from a flying bomb.

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## Metallic window



Metallic windows or “chaff” were thin pieces of black paper backed with aluminium foil. They were dropped from aircraft to disrupt radar signals. The pieces were cut to half the target radar’s wavelength, causing the signal to resonate and making it harder for opposing defence systems to track the aircraft’s movement

The technology was suppressed for much of the war as it was deemed too easy to copy. It was feared that the Luftwaffe were develop their own versions which they would be able to it against the Allies. Windows were first used in July 1943, when the centimetric radars used by Fighter Command were to deemed to be sophisticated enough to cope with a possible retaliation by the Luftwaffe.

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## The Home Guard



The Third Surrey Weybridge Battalion were part of the Home Guard.

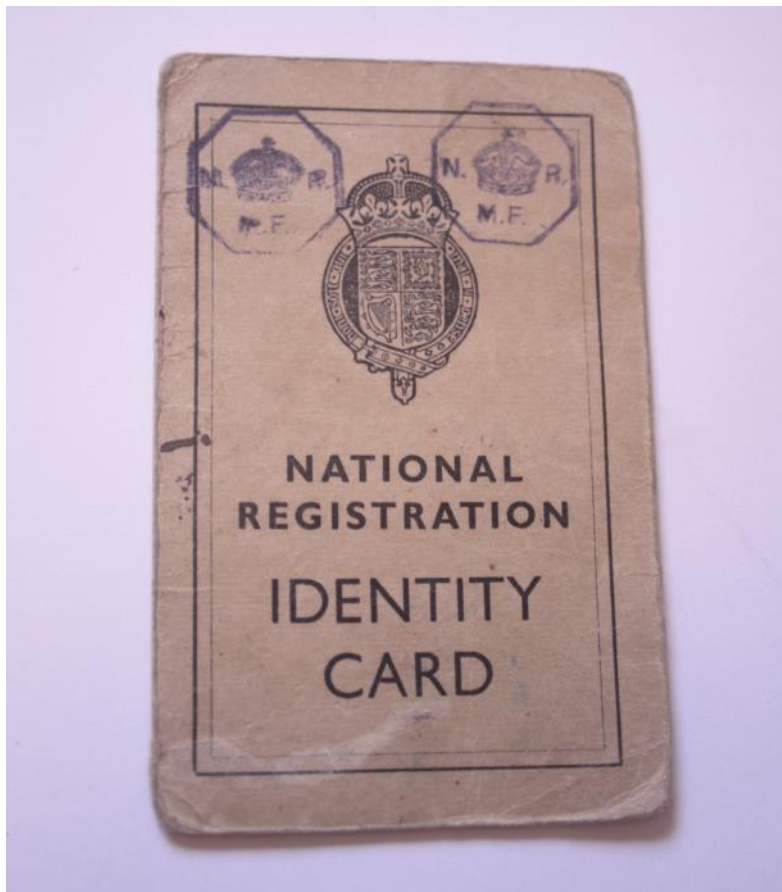
The Home Guard was formed in May 1940, just before the evacuation of Dunkirk, when German invasion of Britain seemed a real threat. The Home Guard was originally known as the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). They were drawn from men aged 17 to 65 years old who had not been called up for various reasons e.g. being in a reserved occupation, ill health or too old for call-up. They performed their Home Guard duties on a part-time, voluntary basis alongside their normal occupation. A Home Guard Cadet Force of boys and 15 -18 years old was started in many areas too. The Officers of the units were frequently men who had been officers during World War I.

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# Elmbridge Museum National Registration Identity Card



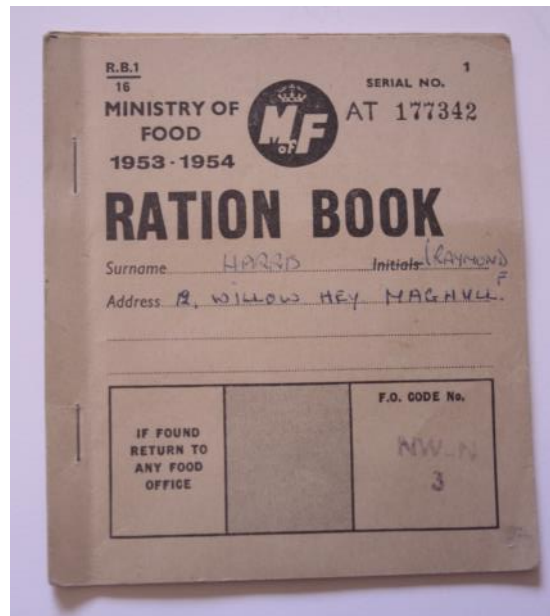
On 29th September 1939 the National Register was established and identity cards were issued to every civilian in the UK. Throughout World War II and until 1952 everyone in Great Britain had to carry an Identity Card with their own personal number. If stopped on the street by a policeman or military guard you had to produce your card and answer any questions. It was an offense to not produce your identity card when stopped. Identity cards were easy to forge as they didn't include photographs of the owner.

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# Elmbridge Museum Food Ration Book



Food rationing began in Britain on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1940. It was introduced as imports were declining—as the war progressed any space on incoming ships made available for materials for weapons and uniforms rather than food. Ships were also needed for transporting troops. Rationing ensured a more equal sharing of scarce resources. Those with money got no more of the necessities than those on very low incomes. For many poorer families rationing actually gave them a better quality diet than in the 1930s.

Under the food rationing scheme each person had to register with one butcher, grocer and dairy and could only buy their rationed goods from those shops. The names of shopkeepers can be seen written or stamped inside the ration book. When food was purchased the appropriate coupons were taken out of the ration book, but throughout the war the food that was rationed or the amounts allowed varied, keeping shop keepers on their toes!

Vegetables were never rationed but people were encouraged to grow their own under the Dig for Victory campaign.

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## Dried Eggs



The Ministry managed to get spam, dried eggs and dried milk in large quantities from the USA. The egg powder made rubbery omelettes and puddings but became quite popular. These high energy foods were important to make up for the little amount of overall food that could be imported.

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# Elmbridge Museum Petrol Coupon

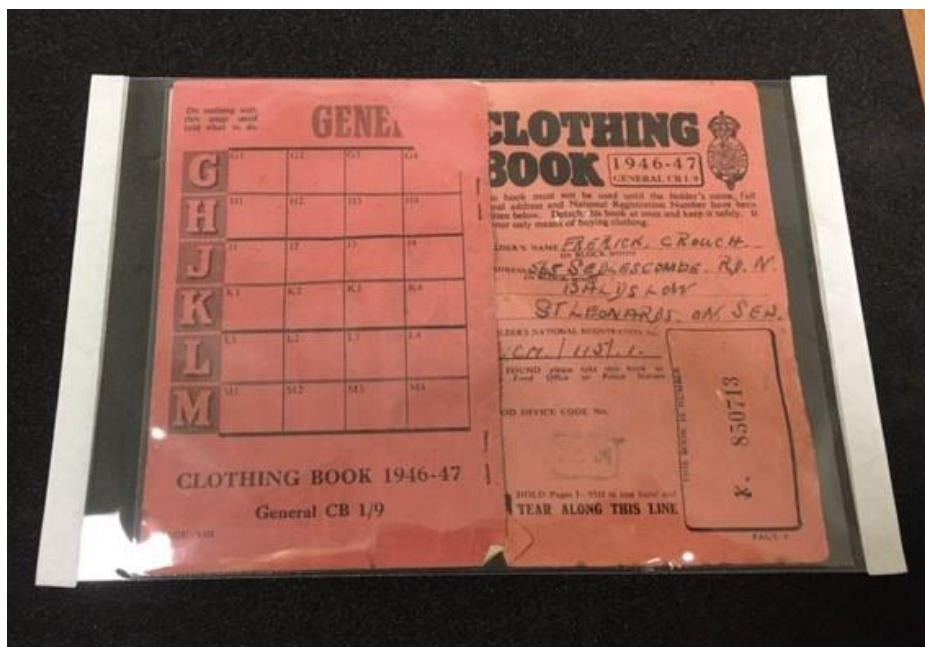


Petrol was one of the first resources that was rationed after the outbreak of the Second World War. Coupons were collected from the post office, where motorists would have to provide their vehicle registration book.

Initially each coupon reflected one unit, which equated to a gallon of fuel. To prevent hoarding, the coupons were only valid for set period. On 1st July 1942 the basic civilian petrol allowance was abolished, and only official users such as the emergency services, bus companies, farmers and the military had access to fuel.

Although regulations were relaxed once the war came to an end, petrol rationing continued until 1950.

# Elmbridge Museum Clothing Ration Book

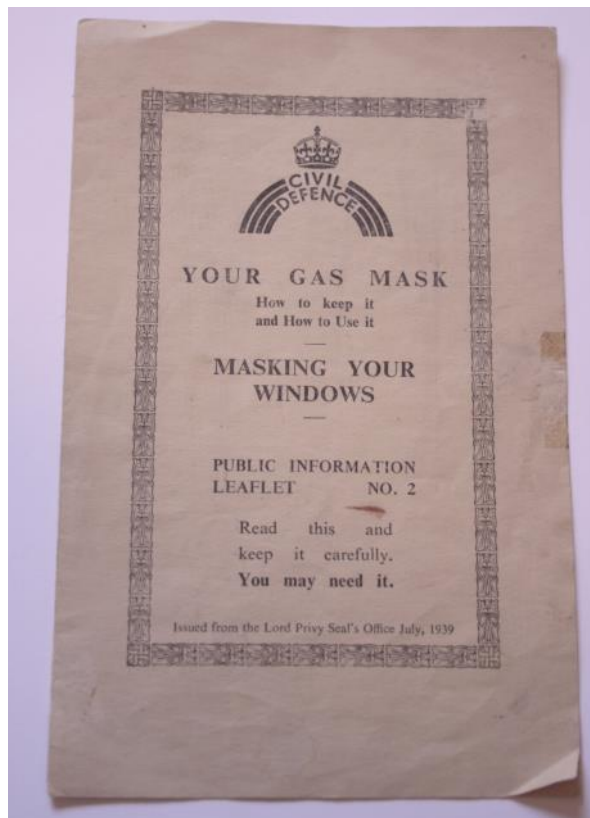


Clothes rationing was introduced on 1 June 1941 as the demand for uniforms increased. These were not just uniforms for the soldiers—the women's auxiliary forces as well as many war volunteers were also in need of official clothing. Materials usually found in clothes were also needed to produce items central to the war effort, such as tarpaulins and tyres.

Clothes rationing was based on a ranking system. Clothes that took longer to make and used lots of material would be given a higher ranking. For example, a dress would require more coupons than a pair of socks. Every person was given enough coupons to purchase one new outfit a year. Each page of coupons was a different colour and the government would announce when each colour could be used. This was to prevent people spending all their coupons at once.

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## Books, leaflets and posters



The Ministry of Information acted as an instrument of censorship and news dispersal, as well as producing a quantity of material in its own right, particularly booklets on various aspects of the “war effort”. All of the information was controlled to stop German propagandists spreading disinformation. The Government started to censor the news from 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1939. The Ministry of Food also poured out innumerable leaflets containing advice on making the best use of scarce food resources.

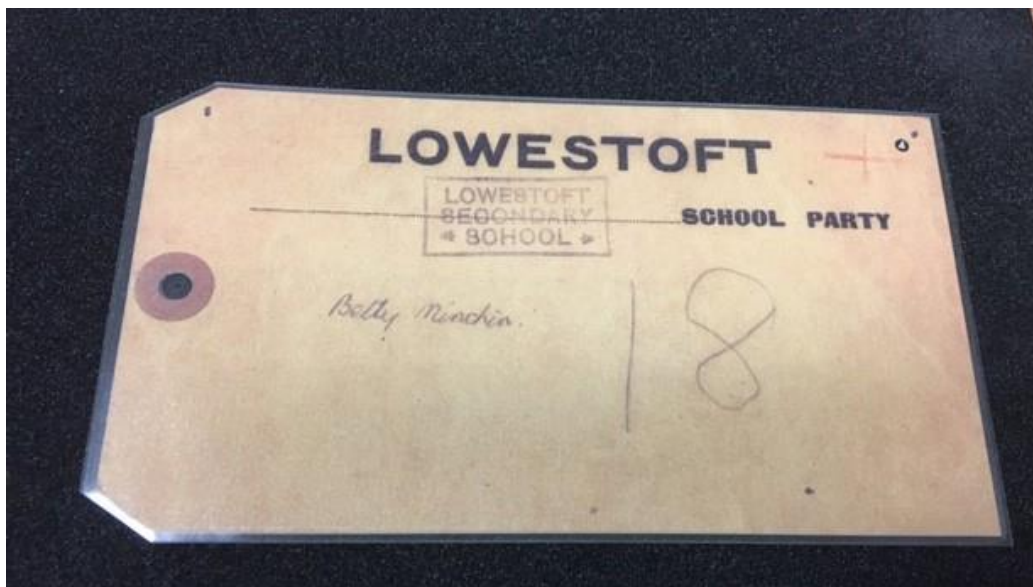
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## Evacuee label



The first wave of evacuation began on 1 September 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland. Children, pregnant women, mothers with infants and the infirm were evacuated from urban areas with a high risk of being bombed and sent to the countryside. In the first months of the war there were no bombing raids on British cities so people began to return home. In October 1940 the Blitz began, prompting another wave of evacuation.

A large proportion of evacuees were children travelling without their parents. Some went to live with relatives but many had to stay with complete strangers. While some children enjoyed their new life in the country, others struggled with being separated from their loved ones or were poorly treated by their host families.

In total, more than 3 million people were resettled across England and 10,000 were transported abroad to places like Canada, the USA and Australia.

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