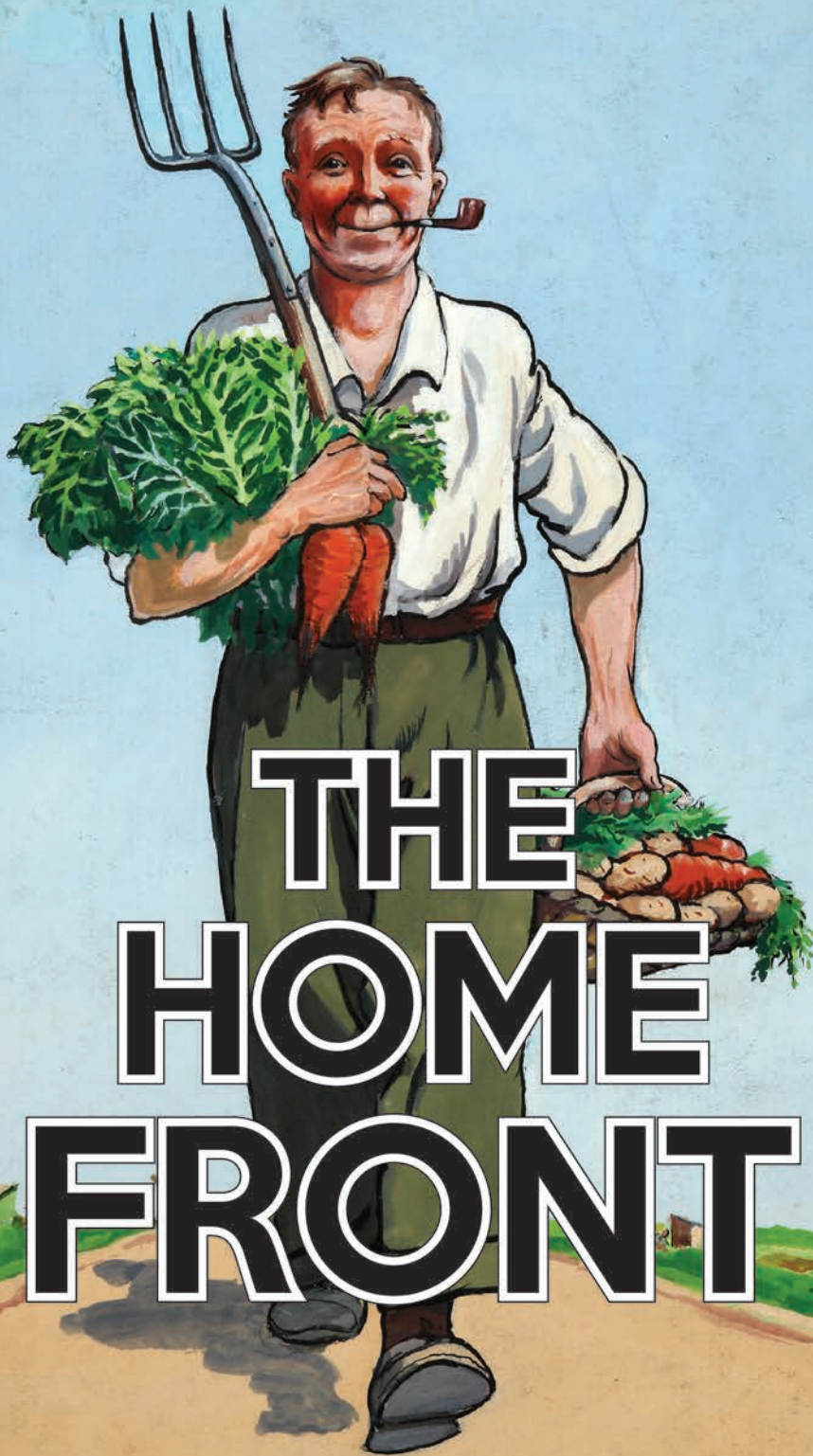


DIG ON FOR VICTORY



THE
HOME
FRONT

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Battling the Blitz

But it was the Blitz that really tested the public's mettle. After the RAF had beaten off the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, the German air force began their attempt to bomb British civilians into surrender. This continued until May 1941 when Hitler turned the force of his military on the Russians. The Germans came back at Britain during 1943 and 1944, however, firing their terrifying V1 bombs and launching V2 rockets from the continent.

A united nation?

The Home Front meant that daily life was disrupted and inconvenienced to an extraordinary degree, but life did go on. However, whilst the majority of the nation pulled together in its hour of need, some decided to make the most of the conflict. Crime rates rose substantially during the blackout, and the black market thrived.

The end of the war was celebrated jubilantly on 8 May 1945. Many partied and danced in the streets, but for others, it was marked by a sense of anti-climax and a loss of purpose.

From The BBC

THE HOME FRONT

Evacuation

With the start of the Second World War came Operation Pied Piper. This was the plan to evacuate civilians from cities and other areas that were at high risk of being bombed or becoming a battlefield in the event of an invasion.

The country was split into three types of areas: Evacuation, Neutral and Reception, with the first Evacuation areas including places like Greater London, Birmingham and Glasgow, and Reception areas being rural such as Kent, East Anglia and Wales. Neutral areas were places that would neither send nor receive evacuees.

Evacuees themselves were split into four categories, focused on specific social groups deemed non-essential to war work:

- 1) school-age children;
- 2) the infirm;
- 3) pregnant women and
- 4) mothers with babies or pre-school children (who would be evacuated together).



Above: Typical dress for evacuees. These are costumes but similar in style to the 1940s.

The Government Evacuation Scheme had been developed during the summer of 1938 by the so-called Anderson Committee, chaired by Sir John Anderson and charged with looking at how the country could

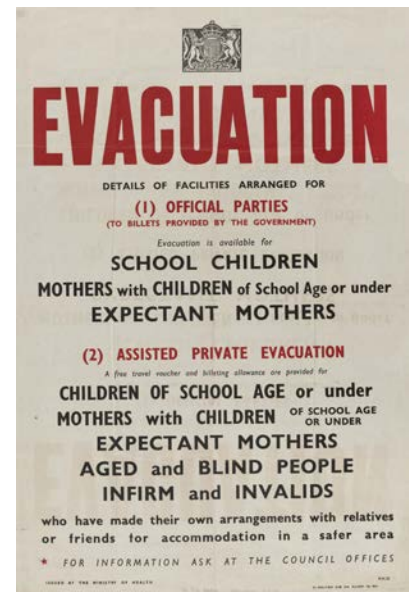
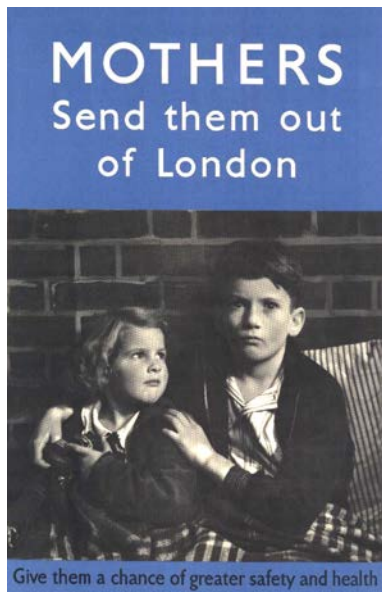


Above and below: Evacuees find the train they will board; most had no idea where they were going.

respond to prolonged, destructive, aerial bombardment. The report laid out the foundations of a wartime evacuation policy, recommending the evacuation of schoolchildren, mothers with infants and the elderly to safer locales - typically rural communities. This proposal, together with the incorporation of another plan designed specifically by the London County Council (LCC) coalesced into an official government Evacuation Scheme from November 1938, and was one of the most radical works of social engineering ever conceived. By the summer of 1939 the LCC were requisitioning buses and trains in preparation and following a mass registration of both evacuees and billeting accommodation, Britain appeared ready for the worst.



THE HOME FRONT



Above: Government propaganda strongly encouraged parents to send their children out of the danger areas (usually cities) to safe areas (usually countryside areas).

Heavy-handed propaganda

The first day of the evacuation was shown in the press as a great success and an example of the people's optimism, strength and commitment to the war effort. But many witnesses remember only chaos and confusion, and parents were heartbroken to see their families divided. And the process wasn't always the answer to securing children's safety. In the same account of an evacuation from Norfolk, it was recorded that: '[The children] sailed from Scotland and, after a week, we were awakened early one morning by the telephone to say that the ship had been torpedoed, but that our girl had been taken by a tanker to Glasgow.'

A life-changing event

For some children this was their first taste of living in the countryside or abroad; not all of them found the change easy to adapt to. Some children were treated badly. Others, however, found new friends and enjoyed new experiences and, when the war came to an end, the return to city life was equally emotional.

Life in the countryside

Evacuees and their hosts were often astonished to see how each other lived. Some evacuees flourished in their new surroundings. Others endured a miserable time away from home. Many evacuees from inner-city areas had never seen farm animals before or eaten vegetables. In many instances a child's upbringing in urban poverty was misinterpreted as parental neglect. Equally, some city dwellers were bored by the countryside, or were even used for tiring agricultural work. Some evacuees made their own arrangements outside the official scheme if they could afford lodgings in areas regarded as safe, or had friends or family to stay with. On the morning of 31st August 1939 (three days before war broke out), an evacuation order was given for the next day. Children began frantically assembling in their schools early on the morning of 1st September and Operation Pied Piper began in earnest.

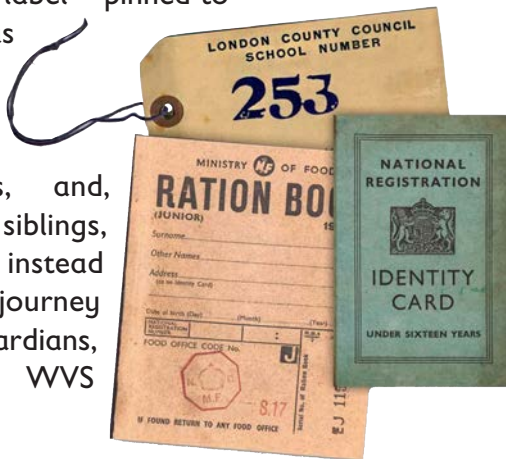
It was a huge challenge, requiring thousands of volunteer helpers. London alone had 1,589 assembly points and although most children boarded evacuation trains at their local stations, trains ran from the capital's main stations every nine minutes for nine hours. Some children in London were even evacuated by ship from the River Thames, sailing to ports such as Great Yarmouth, Felixstowe and Lowestoft.

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The process involved teachers, local authority officials, railway staff and 17,000 members of the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), who provided practical assistance, looking after apprehensive and tired evacuees at stations and providing refreshments.

In the first three days of official evacuation 1.5 million people were moved. In England alone 673,000 unaccompanied schoolchildren, 406,000 mothers and young children and 3,000 expectant mothers were relocated.

Children had to carry a kit, comprising: 'a handbag or case containing the child's gas mask, a change of under-clothing, night clothes, house shoes or plimsolls, spare stockings or socks, a toothbrush, a comb, towel, soap and face cloth, handkerchiefs; and, if possible, a warm coat or mackintosh. Each child should bring a packet of food for the day.' Each child had a luggage label pinned to their coat on which was written their name, school and evacuation authority. Separated from their parents, and, sometimes, siblings, schoolchildren were instead accompanied on their journey by a small army of guardians, mostly teachers and WVS personnel.



Evacuation day was a deeply emotional and, often, traumatic experience for all involved and full of uncertainty and tearful goodbyes. Some children were excited at the prospect of the forthcoming 'adventure', but most evacuees were unaware of where they were going and when they would be coming back. Faced with enormous upheaval and long separation from loved ones, the initial separation was devastating and heart-rending for both mothers and children as whole families were dislocated and uprooted. The fear of bombing attacks meant that most parents considered evacuation was best, as children would be safer away from the city.



Above: The rail system delivered most of the evacuees to locations all over the British Isles.



THE HOME FRONT



Above: A policeman helps young evacuees and the nun escorting them at a London station on 18th May 1940.

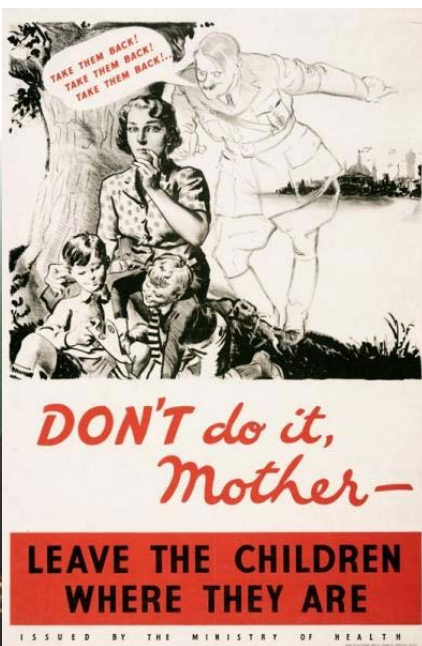


Above: Evacuees on the Dartington Estate, Devon.

Yet, evacuation was not compulsory and some parents were understandably reluctant to take part, despite propaganda posters which encouraged co-operation. For those parents who did co-operate it would be a nervous wait of several days to find out where their children had gone with notification coming via a postcard through the mail.

It was one thing to remove children from at-risk areas, but it was another to find somewhere for them to go. Various options were discussed, with civilians generally preferring the option of camps to be set up and supervised by teachers, but government ministers instead decided to use private billets. It became compulsory for homes to host assigned evacuees, with host families being paid 10 shillings and sixpence (53p; equivalent to £26 today) for the first unaccompanied child, and 8 shillings and sixpence for any subsequent children.

Places were assessed in terms of accommodation available rather than suitability or the hosts' inclination for raising children. This could lead to resentment of those who would be forced to care for children against their will, compounded with that many children did not want to be there in the first place and tried to run away. This problem was particularly prevalent in the lower-class families, as wealthier families often had relatives or school friends in the country to take in their children, rather than relying on strangers.



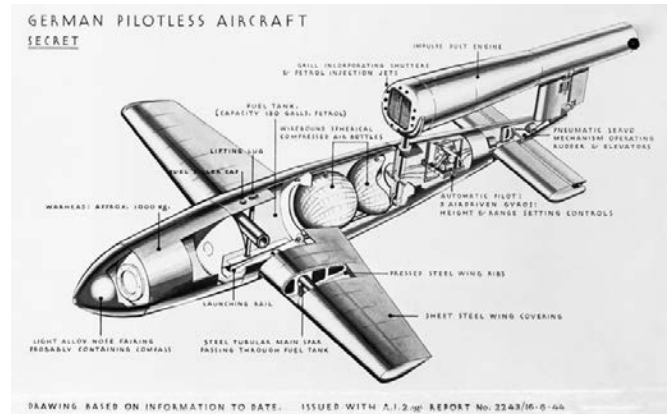
Left: A poster reminding parents that it would be silly to return children to the danger areas.



THE HOME FRONT

Obviously, parents and children often missed each other. In the 'Phoney War' that followed the start of the Second World War, Hitler was not ready for a full-scale attack on Britain and France. This meant uneventful months passed, giving a false sense of safety, so many children began to come back. Despite warnings by the Minister of Health, nearly half of all evacuees had returned to their homes by Christmas. But, when France fell in June 1940, Britain became the next target and the Blitzkrieg began.

Cities such as London, Coventry, Birmingham, Swansea, Plymouth and Sheffield were pounded mercilessly and evacuation became a policy grounded in reality. The south coast of England was also quickly changed from a Reception area to an Evacuation area due to the threat of invasion and so 200,000 children were evacuated (or re-evacuated) to safer locations. This 'trickle' evacuation continued until the end of 1941, but even after the Blitz ended, danger remained. Air attacks continued sporadically, then in 1944 an entirely new threat arrived in the form of Hitler's V-1 flying bombs and V-2 ballistic missiles. This began Operation Rivulet, the final major evacuation of the war. Running between July and September 1944 more than a million people moved out of danger zones.



Above: The V1 Flying Bomb (Doodlebug) which was used by the Germans to bomb London and the home counties.

To try and ease the blow of being separated from their parents, a special song was written for children in 1939 by Gaby Rogers and Harry Philips, entitled 'Goodnight Children Everywhere' and broadcast every night by the BBC:

Goodnight Children Everywhere

*Sleepy little eyes in a sleepy little head,
Sleepy time is drawing near.
In a little while you'll be tucked up in your bed,
Here's a song for baby dear.*

*Goodnight children everywhere,
Your mummy thinks of you tonight.
Lay your head upon your pillow,
Don't be a kid or a weeping willow.*

*Close your eyes and say a prayer,
And surely you can find a kiss to spare.
Though you are far away, she's with you night and day,
Goodnight children everywhere*

*Soon the moon will rise, and caress you with its beams,
While the shadows softly creep.
With a happy smile you will be wrapped up in your dreams,
Baby will be fast asleep. Goodnight children everywhere.*



THE HOME FRONT

However, it is often overlooked that not all children were evacuated in the first place. Evacuation was a voluntary process and, while blackouts, gas masks and other wartime changes were accepted, many parents refused to part with their children during the war. Parents' concerns were not helped by the fact that the government could often not even tell them where their children would be going, and so only about 47 per cent of children were actually evacuated in the initial wave.



When the war ended the evacuees could finally return home. Some found their houses had been bombed or their families had departed (or no longer wanted them) but for most it was a happy reunion and brought an end to a prolonged period of fear, confusion and separation. But, for children used to being in the country, and parents not used to having children to deal with, this was not always easy. Many evacuees were now four or five years older than when they left; appearances, accents, outlooks and preferences had changed. Evacuation had reshaped an entire generation of youth, yet without Operation Pied Piper, and the biggest movement of people in Britain's history, the death toll in the Second World War would undoubtedly have been much higher.



More than 2.5 million children and countless families, including foster carers (whose role was vital), coped both practically and emotionally with evacuation in World War Two, having to make very real sacrifices in very unsettling times. It's hard to imagine how society would cope with such a situation today and, thankfully, is a dilemma that most of us have never had to face. Nevertheless, the subject of evacuation is one which continues to resonate.



Evacuation didn't just take place from major cities, nor did all evacuees stay in the UK; some travelled abroad. Britain also feared invasion from the sea and the eastern and south-eastern coasts were particularly vulnerable.

Above: Evacuees often returned to destroyed homes, sometimes to parents who didn't want them back or with changed attitudes and expectations of life.

Returning home against advice

By the end of 1939, when the widely expected bombing raids on cities had failed to materialise, many parents whose children had been evacuated in September decided to bring them home

again. By January 1940 almost half of the evacuees returned home. The government produced posters like this one, urging parents to leave evacuees where they were while the threat of bombing remained likely.

Another wave of evacuations

Additional rounds of official evacuation occurred nationwide in the summer and autumn of 1940, following the German invasion of France in May-June and the beginning of the Blitz in September. Evacuation was voluntary and many children remained in the cities. Some stayed to help, care for or support their families.

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Rationing in World War Two

Why didn't Britain have enough? (See also page 11)

Less than a third of the food available in Britain at the start of the war was produced at home. Enemy ships targeted incoming Allied merchant vessels, preventing vital supplies - including fruit, sugar, cereals and meat - from reaching the UK. Because of this, and to ensure fair distribution of supplies, the Ministry of Food issued ration books to every person, and families had to register at one shop.

Official rationing began on 8 January 1940 with bacon, butter and sugar. Rations were distributed by weight, monetary value or points. One person's typical weekly allowance would

be: one fresh egg; 4oz margarine and bacon (about four rashers); 2oz butter and tea; 1oz cheese; and 8oz sugar. Meat was allocated by price, so cheaper cuts became popular. Points could be pooled or saved to buy pulses, cereals, tinned goods, dried fruit, biscuits and jam.



Above: This was the weekly ration for an adult in Great Britain in 1940. Once it was gone, it was gone.

Luxuries were in short supply

Despite the stresses of wartime, the health of the poor improved. People were encouraged to eat protein, carbohydrates, pulses and fruit and vegetables. Babies, pregnant women and the sick were allocated additional nutrients such as milk, orange juice and cod liver oil. Luxuries, including alcohol and cigarettes, weren't officially rationed but were limited and expensive as factories focused on the war effort. From September 1939, petrol was only available for business or essential purposes. Furniture and clothing became utilitarian: pleats and turn-ups disappeared from trousers and garments were plain. Women painted gravy browning on bare legs as a replacement for silk stockings.

Right: Silk stockings were almost impossible to obtain so women used gravy browning to draw lines, to make it look like they had stockings.



THE HOME FRONT



Above: British restaurants provided hot, good meals for those who were bombed out or displaced by the war.

Restaurant food was curtailed by price (a maximum of five shillings per meal) and quantity, but eating out was popular with those who could afford it. Local authority-run 'British Restaurants' fed those bombed out of their homes and also provided cheap meals for workers. They were often set up in schools and church halls. By 1944 there were 2000 British Restaurants in London alone.

A healthier nation Digs For Victory

The pioneering Ministry of Food's Dig For Victory campaign encouraged self-sufficiency, and allotment numbers rose from 815,000 to 1.4 million. Pigs, chickens and rabbits were reared domestically for meat, whilst vegetables were grown anywhere that could be cultivated. By 1940 wasting food was a criminal offence. As sugar was in short supply, sweets were rationed from July 1942 to February 1953. An attempt to de-ration them in 1949 lasted just four months, as demand far outstripped supply.



Above: Posters were used to encourage people to turn gardens, parks or any other available land into plots to grow vegetables.

The resourceful use of rations



Above: SPAM - chopped ham and other ingredients and still available today.

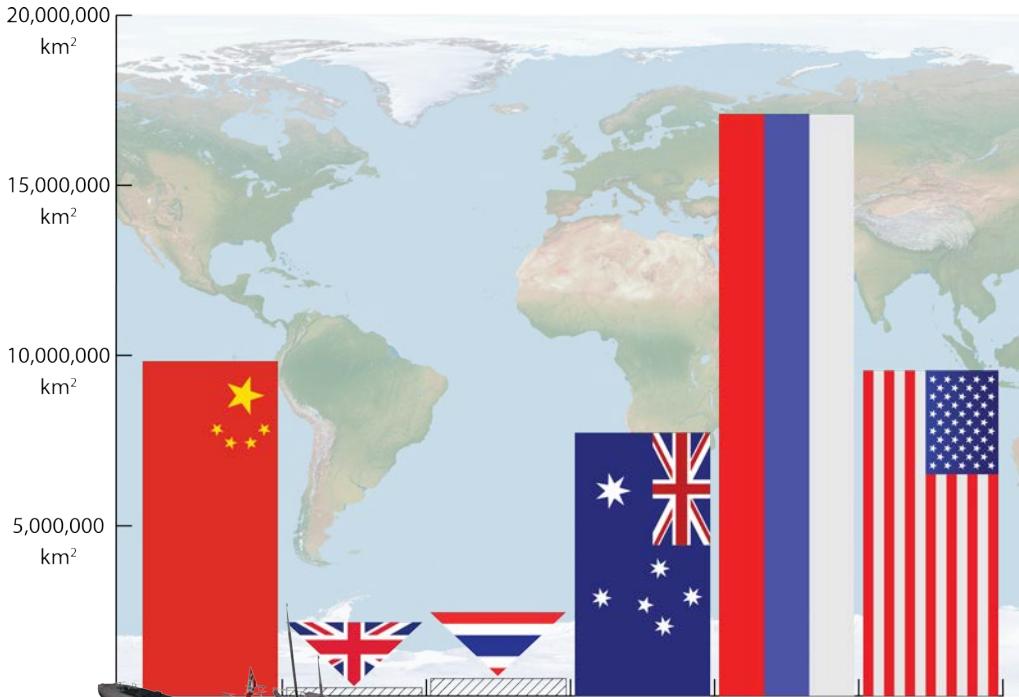
The Ministry of Food produced posters, leaflets and also Food Flashes, which were shown to 20 million cinemagoers from 1942 to 1946. Marguerite Patten's cooking tips on the Home Service drew six million listeners daily. Homefront housewives had to be creative: 'mock' recipes included 'cream' (margarine, milk and cornflour) and 'goose' (lentils and breadcrumbs). Amongst other things, carrots replaced sugar in apricot tart and were also eaten on sticks as lollies. Powdered egg and Spam from the US were mainstays of the era.

Despite the complexity, the queuing and the paperwork, many appreciated the fairness and equality of rationing.

THE HOME FRONT

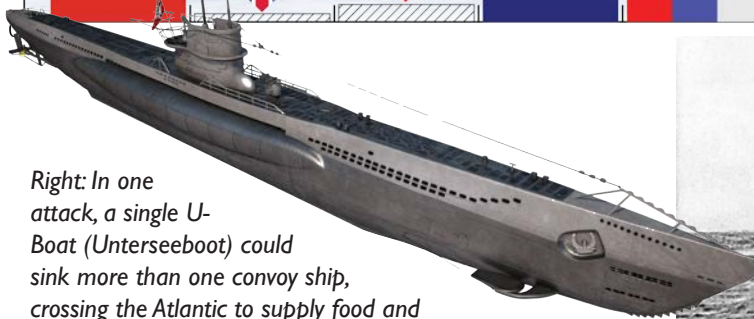
Why didn't Britain have enough? Comparative maps

Great Britain is a small island located just off the coast of continental Europe. Although well-known throughout the world, it is not generally appreciated how small the island is compared with other countries. Here is a graph comparing the size of Great Britain (the United Kingdom) with other countries.



As an island, Great Britain was not able to supply all its own food needs. 60% of food was imported, and to get to the island, oceans had to be crossed.

The U-Boats of Germany sank millions of tonnes of shipping, which meant that food was in short supply during the war.



Right: In one attack, a single U-Boat (Unterseeboot) could sink more than one convoy ship, crossing the Atlantic to supply food and other goods to Great Britain.



THE HOME FRONT

Civil Defence in WWII

Put that light out!

During the inter-war period, fear of airborne conflicts grew and grew. The December 1937 Air Raid Precaution Act made preparations compulsory for all local authorities. Local government became responsible for building air raid shelters, providing gas masks and recruiting volunteers for civil defence and the emergency services.

ARP wardens built Anderson and Morrison shelters, enforced blackout regulations and distributed 38 million gas masks to the public. They also kept order in public air raid shelters, administered first aid and watched for fires.

Wardens were initially the butt of jokes in the first weeks of the war when the German planes failed to materialise. When the bombing began, however, they were often first on the scene and went beyond the call of duty to rescue others.

Royal Observer Corps

The Royal Observer Corps was created to detect, track, identify and report aircraft over Britain. It was awarded the 'Royal' title by King George VI in 1941, in recognition of its valiant work during the Battle of Britain during which the volunteers provided RAF Fighter Command with the numbers, type and height of incoming enemy aircraft.



The Royal Observer Corps played a vital role in spotting enemy aircraft coming over to bomb England.

Right: Marking blackout time.
Below: Some Wardens were women.



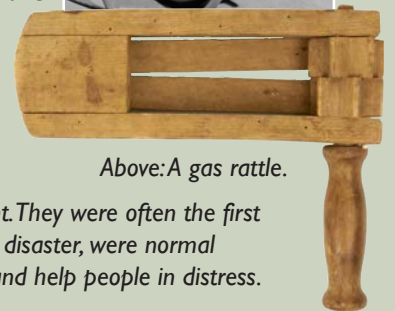
Right: A gas mask and stirrup pump.



Above: A gas rattle.



Left: An ARP whistle.



ARP Wardens and their equipment. They were often the first people to arrive at the scene of a disaster, were normal civilians but well trained to cope and help people in distress.

THE HOME FRONT

The Home Front

The concept of a 'Home Front' - when civilians are mobilised en masse to support the war effort during a conflict - dates from World War One, as far as the British are concerned. It was re-activated in 1938 during the Munich crisis, when civilians were encouraged to enrol in Air Raid Precautions (ARP) or the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS).

Anticipating terror from the air

ARP was a reaction to the fear, shared throughout Europe in the 1930s, of the mass bombing of civilians from the air. In the 1930s, government estimates calculated that 600,000 people would be killed and 1.2 million injured in air raids during a future war.

Evacuation had already been running for two days by the time war with Germany was announced on 3rd September 1939. Throughout the war, three million people were moved beyond the reach of German bombers, in what became a fundamentally life-changing event for many. The internment of German and Austrian 'aliens' also commenced at the outbreak of war, and those considered high risk were interned immediately. Later, Italian aliens were 'rounded up' under Churchill's orders after Italy joined the war in June 1940.

'Doing your bit'

The nation's labour was once again mobilised, and to an even greater extent than World War One. Half a million women joined the uniformed services, and millions more worked in the factories and on the land. Both men (from 1939) and women (from 1941) were conscripted. Men were even conscripted into the coal mines - one in ten of those enlisted domestically.

The regulation of society

Ration books were issued when food rationing came into force in January 1940. Imported items including meats, sugar, tea and coffee were divided equally between all adults and children. These goods arrived by merchant ship and were vulnerable to submarine attacks and blockades. Imported non-food items such as textiles, soap and petrol were also rationed.

The invasion scare of June-September 1940 caused all road and rail signposts and maps to be removed. A call for scrap metal to recycle into Spitfires resulted in the removal of decorative iron railings surrounding many civic spaces, and aluminium saucepans were collected by the million.

Public awareness was heightened by the protective sandbagging of public buildings and monuments, and the growth of allotments (3.5 million by 1943) in every spare area of playing field or village green. The pace of life was controlled by air raid alerts and all clears, as well as the enforcement of a war-long blackout.

Everywhere, Home Front posters exhorted citizens to 'Dig for Victory', remember that 'Careless Talk Costs Lives', whilst others repeated Churchill's phrase 'Let us Go Forward Together'.

THE HOME FRONT

The Home Guard

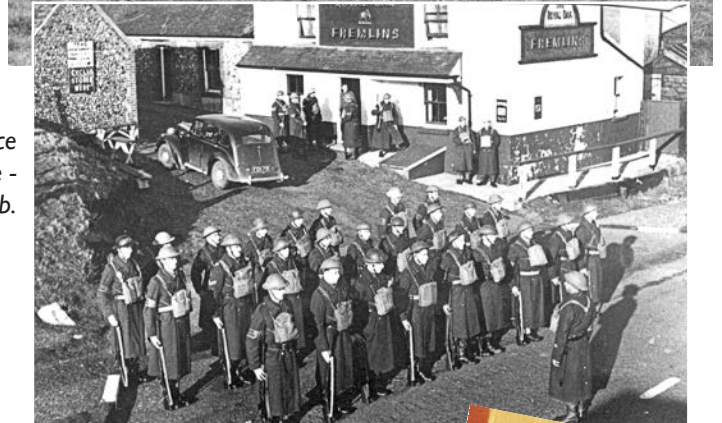
On 14th May 1940, Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, encouraged men aged 17-65 and unable to serve in the forces to join the Local Defence Volunteers. Within 24 hours, 250,000 men had registered and, by the end of June 1940, nearly 1.5million had volunteered. Weapons were slow to materialise, due in part to the equipment losses at Dunkirk, so many initially improvised with brooms, umbrellas and golf clubs. In July 1940 Winston Churchill changed the name to 'Home Guard'.



Above and below: The most famous 'Home Guard' unit was in a BBC comedy TV series - the Warmington-on-Sea Home Guard. Completely fictitious, but firmly based on the adventures and misadventures of the real Home Guard.



Above: The real Home Guard, in this case guarding Buckingham Palace.



Right: The Home Guard, first known as the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), would parade in any available space - often the car park or apron of the local pub.



Above and right: The first 'home guard' was called the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers) and did not have uniforms or modern equipment until quite a few months after their formation. Manuals were produced to show the men, aged under or over military service age, how to act and fight.



THE HOME FRONT

The Emergency Services

As war broke out, the Emergency Services began to appeal for volunteers, their usual numbers depleted by military service. The Auxiliary Ambulance Service began recruiting, and Ennis Smith became the youngest ambulance driver aged 16.

The Auxiliary Fire Service (later the National Fire Service) was also created. Its members were usually too old or young for military service and most were unpaid part-timers. Initially perceived as 'service-dodgers', they became public heroes when the Blitz began.

Many police officers also were young men or reservists, so the government and the police authorities had to recruit volunteers to keep up the numbers. Reserve policemen, special constables and women officers were signed up. As well as normal law-keeping duties, they became responsible for checking on enemy aliens, pursuing Army deserters and assisting the rescue services during bombing raids.

A woman's place?

As World War Two loomed, campaigns for female volunteers to fill men's roles commenced. Although thousands volunteered, conscription became unavoidable and, in December 1941, the National Service Act (No 2) made conscription legal for women.

By September 1943, more than one million women had joined the Women's Voluntary Service. They staffed field kitchens; ran nurseries and hostels; cared for evacuees; drove ambulances; organised canteens for those bombed out of their homes; and worked the land in the Women's Land Army.

Women also joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (the WRNS), the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Amongst other things these organisations manned searchlights, launched barrage balloons and maintained Royal Navy ships.

As the war ended, however, it was taken for granted that women would return to the home and there were mixed feelings as they were dismissed from their roles.



Above and above right: Recruited members sometimes received extra rations.

Above: Equipment was often a local van or car, fitted with fire or ambulance equipment.



Above: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a fully trained ATS Junior Commander in World War II.

THE HOME FRONT

Christmas 1940

Christmas under fire



Above: Christmas in major cities was often spent in the Anderson shelter in the garden. People made the very best they could and many remember such times as being the best Christmases.

deckered out their temporary homes with makeshift decorations. Very short Christmas trees were in demand because of the height of the shelters.

By the end of 1940, 24,000 civilians had been killed in the Blitz and hundreds of thousands made homeless. In November, German bombers had obliterated Coventry city centre and there had been particularly fierce raids on Manchester and Liverpool in the days leading up to Christmas. The public were now mourning the loss of their loved ones on the home front and in combat, as well as praying for the 41,000 British soldiers captured on the continent.

In order to avoid the bombs, many families spent some of the festive period in air-raid shelters and other places of refuge and



Above: A BBC recreation of a wartime Christmas dinner. There was plenty of food but nothing like the normal fare of turkey, ham, sausages, roast vegetables, sauces, creams, other meats and all 'the trimmings'.

The men are holding their gifts - bars of soap; probably home made. The lady is holding a new or reconditioned spade (for digging the vegetable patch in the garden).

other unlikely ingredients. Alcohol was available but, again, prohibitively expensive. There would have been no after-dinner French cheeses or brandy due to the German occupation.

'On the ration'

Assuming that gas or electricity was available, Christmas dinner would have still been a triumph of ingenuity. Turkey was unaffordable and most made do with other cuts of meat, which were still expensive. For example, a family of four's weekly meat ration probably wouldn't even cover the cost of a small chicken. One alternative was home-reared chickens or rabbits, much to the shock of young children who often regarded them as pets. Home-grown vegetables and chutneys would have also made the table.

Rations were scrimped and saved including ham, bacon, butter, suet and margarine. The tea and sugar rations were increased in the week before Christmas. Very little fruit was imported and nuts were very costly. Consequently, cooks had to improvise Christmas cakes and puddings devoid of dried fruit and marzipan, using instead sponge or

THE HOME FRONT

Presents and gifts

The public were discouraged from giving presents and encouraged to give as much as they could to the war effort. Almost £10 million in war bonds was sold in the week before Christmas. Consumer goods were becoming scarcer as the war wore on but a theme of air-raid-shelter-friendly presents emerged. Flasks and sleeping bags were in demand and even 'gas masks' for dolls.

Home-made presents were popular too, as were second-hand ones. For working-class people 'make do and mend' was the norm. Dads carved sailing ships and dolls' houses, whilst mums knitted with spare bits of wool and made sweets. Children's gifts were also donated from other countries and charities.

Men and women on duty

Postmen attempted to deliver millions of letters and parcels to streets that had been razed by the bombing, whilst many more civilian men and women were on duty in their roles as ARP wardens, Home Guardsmen, Observers, fire fighters, ambulance drivers and other crucial occupations. Travel was discouraged; not just because of fuel rationing, but to keep the roads and railways free for transporting war goods and returning troops.

No Christmas bells

Entertainment over the festive period included BBC Radio broadcasts of "Kitchen Front", the King's Speech and variety shows. The BBC also broadcast a Christmas sermon from the ruins of Coventry Cathedral. Elsewhere, church services happened as normal (bomb-damage permitting) but bells were not allowed to be rung, as this signified an invasion, and the windows were not allowed to be lit.

The City burns

Mercifully, there was an unofficial postponement of the bombing by both sides from Christmas Eve until the 27th. Sunday 29th December marked one of the fiercest bombing raids of the whole Blitz - so fierce it caused what became known as the Second Great Fire of London. As the City rapidly became a raging inferno, the dome of St Paul's Cathedral was photographed towering unscathed above the carnage. This became one of the most powerful images of the whole war, and one which inspired the British public on the eve of another year of conflict.



Above and below: Christmas decorations could not be bought so they were handmade, either at home or as above, at school, or below by WRENS.



Above and left: St Paul's Cathedral in London, at night, surrounded by flames and fires in 1940.

THE HOME FRONT

The Women's Land Army



What was the Women's Land Army?

The Women's Land Army (WLA) made a significant contribution to boosting Britain's food production during the Second World War.

Before the Second World War, Britain had imported much of its food. When war broke out, it was necessary to grow more food at home and increase the amount of land in cultivation. With many male agricultural workers joining the armed forces, women were needed to provide a new rural workforce.

The WLA had originally been set up in 1917 but disbanded at the end of the First World War. It reformed in June 1939. Women were initially asked to volunteer to serve in the Land Army and, from December 1941, could also be conscripted into land work. At its peak in 1944, there were more than 80,000 women – often known as 'land girls' – in the WLA.

Land girls did a wide variety of jobs on the land. They worked in all weathers and conditions and could be directed to work anywhere in the country.

Here are some facts about the work of the WLA during the Second World War.

The WLA recruited women from towns and cities

By autumn 1941, more than 20,000 women had volunteered to serve in the Women's Land Army (WLA). One third of these volunteers had lived in London or another large city. Posters, such as this one, suggested that the WLA offered a healthy outdoor lifestyle, which perhaps appealed to many urban women and girls.



Above: A young woman, wearing the Land Army uniform, stands with a pitchfork in her left hand and holds her jacket in her right. She surveys a field of wheat.

Right: A patriotic poster showing Spitfires flying over a safe, protected British landscape.

This type of poster would show that the Land Girls were safe in their work and that the work was supporting the war effort.



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Many land girls lived in hostels

Many land girls lived in at the farms where they worked. However, in many rural areas, living conditions could be very basic and the lifestyle lonely. As larger numbers of women were recruited, hostels were set up to house land girls. By 1944, there were 22,000 land girls living in 700 hostels.

Right: The interior of a billet (temporary lodging) with bunk beds and Women's Land Army girls preparing for bed.



There were strict rules about how to wear the WLA uniform

The coat must be light brown, $\frac{3}{4}$ length single-breasted with an open-collared overall coat made of drill material. Fitted to each hip are deep flapless pockets and a cloth belt is attached to the rear of the garment. Fitted to the front are four olive-coloured plastic detachable buttons, secured to the coat by removable shanks, as are the single buttons attached to the cuffs.

Right: The basic uniform of the Land Girl. A tie and badge were also issued but often kept for more formal occasions.



A quarter of all land girls did dairy work



Above: Land Girls carrying empty milk buckets. Many Land Girls, especially those from cities, had perhaps never even seen a cow before.

By 1944, when the Women's Land Army was at its peak, around one quarter of all land girls were employed in some form of dairy work. This painting (below) depicts a scene at Sparsholt Farm Institute near Winchester. This was a former agricultural college which had been converted into a training establishment for members of the Women's Land Army.

Right: Inside a dairy with women washing equipment and another rolling a milk-churn in centre foreground.



THE HOME FRONT

Land Girls were employed as rat catchers



Pests such as rats posed a serious threat to supplies of food and animal fodder on British farms. During wartime, there were thought to be over 50 million rats in Britain. To help counter this threat, teams of land girls were trained to work in anti-vermin squads. Two land girls are reputed to have killed 12,000 rats in just one year. Land girls in anti-vermin squads also were also trained to kill foxes, rabbits and moles.

Left: Land Girl Rat Catchers at work as part of their training on a Sussex farm. In the background Audrey Prickett and Betty Long plug a rat hole after inserting poison and in the foreground Eileen Barry lays some bait, as Audrey Willis leans over the hedge to check she is doing it properly.

Land Girls were paid less than men for the same work

Land girls were paid directly by the farmers who employed them. The minimum wage was 28s per week and from this, 14s was deducted for board and lodging. The average wage for male agricultural workers was 38s per week.



The basic working week for land girls was 48 hours in winter and 50 in summer. Initially there were no holidays – paid or unpaid, just a free travel pass after six months. However, conditions improved after 1943 with the introduction of the 'Land Girls Charter'. This introduced one week's holiday per year and raised the minimum wage.

Left: Land Girl Iris Joyce receives her first week's pay from the farmer with whom she is billeted. Prior to her assignment to this farm, somewhere in Britain, Iris underwent four weeks training at the Northampton Institute of Agriculture to transform her from a typist into a Land Girl.

Land Girls were employed by Kew Gardens

While the majority of land girls were employed on general farm work, many were also given the opportunity to carry out more specialist horticultural tasks. Until 1943, some were employed in private country houses to help maintain extensive kitchen gardens. The famous botanic gardens at Kew in Surrey also employed land girls. The camomile being harvested in this photograph was planted at the request of the Ministry of Home Security for use as a quick-growing, wiry camouflage for new airfields.

Right: Curator of Kew Gardens, Mr Campbell, oversees the harvesting of seeds from the camomile lawn by members of the WLA. The camomile was planted to be used as a quick-growing, wiry camouflage for new airfields.



THE HOME FRONT

Land Girls worked on land reclamation

As part of the drive to produce extra food, the Government needed more land to be turned over for food production. Efforts were made to transform areas of land previously unsuitable for farming. One of the most significant projects was in East Anglia where thousands of acres of fenland were drained. Heavy machinery such as excavators and tractors, often operated by land girls, were needed to carry out this work.



Above: A rural scene with women of the Women's Land Army working on land drainage. Four cranes are being used to create and maintain a series of drainage ditches filled with water. One of these cranes to the left has sunk into a waterlogged patch of ground and is being dragged out with a pulley controlled by a group of WLA workers. The horizon is lined by trees and there are some farm buildings in the left foreground.

The WLA had a specialist forestry branch called the Timber Corps

The Women's Timber Corps was set up in 1942 to help source and prepare wood which was needed urgently for pit props and telegraph poles. The work carried out by women in the Timber Corps, known as 'Lumber Jills', included selecting and measuring trees suitable for felling, sawing and lifting timber and burning brushwood. Around 6,000 women worked in the Timber Corps.



Above: Land Army girls sawing larch poles for use as pit props.

Land Girls sometimes worked alongside P.O.W.s

Land girls were not the only additional work force available to farmers. By 1943, there were almost 40,000 Italian prisoners of war (P.O.W.) working on British farms. In some places they worked alongside land girls. The general public was also encouraged to help out with farm work, especially at harvest time. This was seen as a cheap way of taking a holiday in the countryside. Special camps were set up to accommodate volunteers.



Above: Land Girls with Italian POWs in East Lothian, Scotland

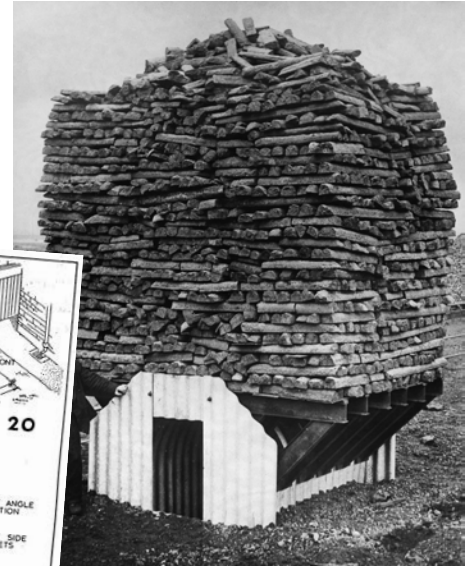
THE HOME FRONT

Shelters and protection

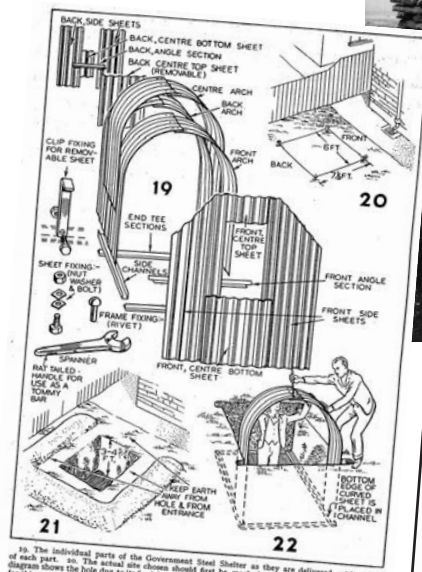
The general population in cities and suburbs had to be protected and the two most effective and well-known ways were the Anderson and the Morrison shelters. In the cities themselves, there were strong public shelters.



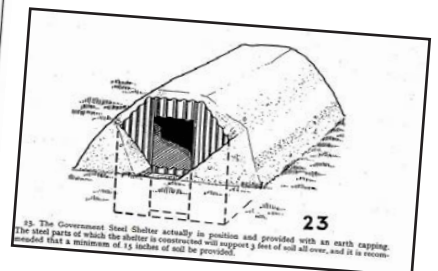
Left: A well developed Anderson shelter. Covered with earth and often sandbags, the structure (as shown on the right) was incredibly strong.



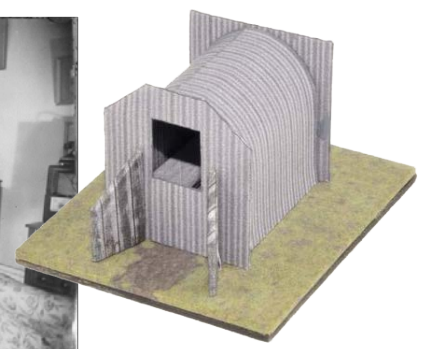
Below: The Morrison shelter was a very strong cage-like shelter inside the home. When not in use, there were many alternative uses for the structure.



19. The individual parts of the Government Steel Shelter as they are delivered, with details of each part. 20. The actual size shown should first be marked out in this manner. 21. This diagram shows the hole dug to its final depth. 22. Erecting the steel arches. Two men are required.



23. The Government Steel Shelter actually in position and provided with an earth capping. The steel parts of which the shelter is constructed will support 3 feet of soil all over, and it is recommended that a minimum of 12 inches of soil be provided.



THE HOME FRONT

Public Air Raid shelters



When air raids started in London (September 1940), people used Tube stations as shelters - which were not designed for such use. The Ministries of Home Security and Transport jointly issued an “urgent appeal”, telling the public “to refrain from using Tube stations as air-raid shelters except in the case of urgent necessity”.

However, the Government was then confronted with an episode of mass disobedience. Over the night of 19th/20th September, thousands of Londoners were taking matters in their own hands. They had flocked to the Tubes for shelter. At some stations, they began to arrive as early as 4pm, with bedding and bags of food to sustain them for the night. By the time the evening rush hour was in progress, they had already staked their “pitches” on the platforms. Police did not intervene. Some station managers, on their own initiatives, provided additional toilet facilities. Transport Minister John Reith, and the chairman of London Transport, Lord Ashfield, inspected Holborn tube station to see conditions for themselves.



The Government then realised that they could not contain this popular revolt. On 21st September, it abruptly changed policy, removing its objections to the use of tube stations. In what it called part of its “deep shelter extension policy”, it decided to close the short section of Piccadilly line from Holborn to Aldwych, and convert different sections for specific wartime use, including a public air raid shelter at Aldwych. Seventy-nine stations were fitted with bunks for 22,000 people, supplied with first aid facilities and equipped with chemical toilets. 124 canteens opened in all parts of the tube system. Shelter marshals were appointed, whose function it was to keep order, give first aid and assist in case of the flooding of the tunnels.



However, tube stations and tunnels were still vulnerable to a direct hit and several such incidents did occur:

- On 14 October 1940, a bomb penetrated the road and tunnel at Balham tube station, blew up the water mains and sewage pipes, and killed 66 people.
- At Bank station a direct hit caused a crater of 120 ft by 100 ft on 11 January 1941, the road above the station collapsed and killed 56 occupants.



This mark showed that goods and services complied with being a 'Controlled Commodity' - a Government standard on austerity - the careful and controlled use of resources to produce certain products.

