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Immediate Release

Fashion on the Ration: 1940s Street Style

27 May 2016 – 1 May 2017

Press View 26 May 2016

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the announcement of clothes rationing in Britain, join IWM North for the major exhibition *Fashion on the Ration: 1940's Street Style*.

This exhibition explores how fashion survived and even flourished under the strict rules of rationing and how despite the restrictions, austerity did not put an end to creative design or fashionable trends on the British home front.

As uniforms and utility became commonplace on the streets of 1940s Britain and clothes were rationed for the first time, see how make do and mend, customising and general creativity still allowed men and women across the country to assert their individuality and personal style.

Fashion on the Ration: 1940's Street Style brings together exhibits including clothing, accessories, photographs and film, official documents and publications, artworks, wartime letters, interviews and ephemera, some of which have never been on display before. The exhibition presents a sense of what life was like on the home front for men and women during wartime Britain.

Amanda Mason, IWM Curator of the exhibition said: "Exploring the clothes that people wore throughout the 1940s gives us a whole new understanding and insight into life in Britain during and immediately after the Second World War. The exhibition also makes us think about the way we dress today and how British style is still influenced by wartime and the changes it brought to the fashion industry."

The five main sections include:

- **Into Uniform** looks at how Second World War Britain became a nation in uniform, arguably the biggest visible change to how people dressed at the time. Many key pieces of uniform, both from the men's and women's services, will be on display revealing the pride and even jealousies felt by those stepping into uniform for war service.
- **Functional Fashion** explores how the demands of wartime life changed the way civilians dressed at work and at home, inspiring retailers to sell innovative and stylish products such as gas-mask handbags and siren suits, examples of which will be on display. Practical workwear also features in this section including original overalls worn by Edith Forsdyke at the A V Roe aircraft factory in Chadderton, Manchester.
- **Rationing and Make do and Mend** will look at why clothes rationing was introduced in 1941, how the scheme worked and how it changed the shopping habits of the nation.

With limited options for buying new clothes, people were encouraged to be creative and make clothes last longer by mending, altering, knitting and creating new clothes out of old material. Items on display include a bridesmaid's dress made from parachute material, a bracelet made from aircraft components, a child's cloak made from a blanket and on display for the first time, stylish wedge heeled shoes made from scraps picked up from a factory floor.

- **Utility Clothing** was introduced in 1941 to tackle unfairness in the rationing scheme and standardise production to help the war effort. Utility fashion ranges were made from a limited range of quality controlled fabrics and this section will feature a catwalk of pieces, ranging from women's summer dresses, underwear, a tweed sports jacket, winter coat and twin set, and a girl's green velvet winter dress. Clothing restricted by 'Austerity Regulations' such as shoes with a maximum two inch heel will also be featured.
- **Beauty as Duty** examines the lengths to which many women went to maintain their personal appearance – and the pressure that they felt to do so. Cosmetics and clothing often had a patriotic edge to them as shown in a colourful display of scarves by Mayfair fashion house Jacqmar, with wartime slogans such as "Keep it Under Your Hat" and "Careless Talk Costs Lives". By wearing these items, women were able to overtly demonstrate they were doing their bit for the war effort.
- **Peace and a new look?** This section looks at how the end of the war meant a return to wearing civilian clothing for demobilised servicemen and women. While clothes rationing continued and Britain struggled with austerity, in 1947, the launch of Christian Dior's ostentatious 'New Look' shook the fashion world desperate for something new and glamorous.
- **Legacy** The exhibition ends with a special installation capturing the thoughts of leading fashion commentators, such as *Great British Sewing Bee's* Patrick Grant and fashion historian Amber Butchart discussing the legacy of the Second World War upon British fashion.

Admission: Adults £6, Concessions £4.50, Children (15 and under) £3, Groups of 10+ Adults £5.40, Groups of 10+ Concessions £4.

For news and alerts on ticket sales and associated events go to www.iwm.org.uk or call 0161 836 4000.

#WhatMyFamilyWore Did your grandmother work in a factory during the Second World War? Do you have a photograph of your uncle in his service uniform? Does your auntie still own a hand-me-down coat from the rationing years?

Be a part of the *Fashion on the Ration* exhibition experience and share your 1940s family stories and photographs with **@IWMNorth**

#WhatMyFamilyWore | #FashionontheRation

– Ends –

For further information, including interviews and image requests please contact:

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Highlights include:



©IWM EPH 3931

Jacqmar scarf, 'Salvage Your Rubber' (1940-1945) © IWM
Accessory

Detail: A Second World War period British propaganda scarf by Jacqmar of London, containing numerous representations of domestic objects, with exhortations to save rubber and recycle goods in general. Jacqmar made propaganda scarves from 1940-1945. They were based in Mayfair (16 Grosvenor Street) and many were produced for the export market as well as for wartime sweethearts, particularly in London. The chief designer was Arnold Lever who continued working for the company even after he had joined the RAF. The scarves fall into three main thematic groups of the armed forces, allies and home front. They usually have the Jacqmar name on the scarf.



©IWM D77

Blackout accessories for sale, Selfridges London, (1940) © IWM
Ministry of Information Official Photograph

Detail: A woman pins a luminous flower onto her jacket lapel and consults her reflection at Selfridge's department store in London. These flowers were prettier than the plain button badges and luminous discs that were also available, but did the same job: making the wearer more visible to other pedestrians and motorists on the dark streets of the blackout.



©IWM EPH 3218

Bridesmaid dress made from parachute silk (1945) © IWM
Clothing

Detail: Second World War period (British Home Front) bridesmaid's dress made for and worn by Janet Saunders for the wedding of Ted Hillman (4th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment) and Ruby Mansfield in 1945.



©IWM EQU 3967
Respirator Carrier Handbag © IWM
Accessory

Details: Respirator and carrier: standard civilian pattern respirator with a black rubber mask and metal filter contained within the base of a black leather lady's clutch handbag.

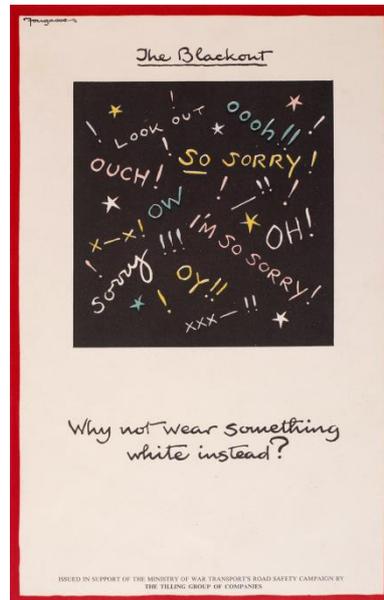


©IWM PST 13850
Air Raid Wardens Wanted (1939) © IWM
Cecil Beaton
Poster



©IWM ART LD 32
Fitting Recruits with Clothing (1940) © IWM
Anthony Gross
Drawing

Details: Gross received a commission to become an Official War Artist in March 1940, and subsequently remained in Britain for the first year recording events at home. This scene was probably recorded during his two weeks with the Guards Barracks at Caterham in Surrey later that month. Recruits sit in a line in a windowed room waiting to be given their uniform. Two men distribute items of clothing to them. Outside, through the window, troops can be seen parading.



©IWM PST 3751
Why not wear something white instead? (1939-1945) © IWM
Poster

Details: A black square filled with coloured text, which is designed to represent the remarks of people bumping into each other during a blackout. Text: The Blackout LOOK OUT ooh!! OUCH! SO SORRY! OW !'M SO SORRY! OH! sorry!!! OY!! Why not wear something white instead? ISSUED IN SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF WAR TRANSPORT'S ROAD SAFETY CAMPAIGN BY THE TILLING GROUP OF COMPANIES



©IWM UNI 73
Women's Land Army Hat © IWM
Clothing

Detail: Wide-brimmed hat of brown fur felt, having a central light khaki band around the raised crown, fitted with an enameled WLA badge to the centre



©IWM EPH 1847
Jacqmar dress 'Happy Landings' © IWM
Clothing

Detail: Long-sleeved dress with collar and fabric-covered buttons down the front, the fabric is cut from Jacqmar's 'Happy Landings' purple fabric print, the dress fabric is gathered in pleats at the front where the buttons stop.



©IWM ART 4438
Ruby Loftus (1943) © IWM
Laura Knight
Painting

Detail: Miss Loftus had been brought to the attention of the War Artist's Advisory Committee as 'an outstanding factory worker'. Knight expected to do a studio portrait but the Ministry of Supply requested that she be painted at work in the Royal Ordnance Factory in Newport. Making a Bofors Breech ring was considered the most highly skilled job in the factory, normally requiring eight or nine years training. Industrial machinery was a wholly new element in Knight's work but her technical accuracy was praised in contemporary reports: Knight, like Loftus, was proving herself in a traditionally male environment



©IWM PST 8774 *Never Was So Much Owed By So Many To So Few*
(1940) © IWM
Poster



©IWM ART PST 2832 *Join the ATS* (1941) © IWM
Abram Games
Poster

Notes to Editors

IWM North

The multi award winning IWM North is designed by world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind to represent a globe shattered by conflict. The iconic building, innovative and dynamic exhibitions, use of digital media through hourly Big Picture Shows and public events explore how war shapes lives and inspire and encourage debate.

Open daily from 10am - 5pm with free admission at The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ (close to MediaCityUK Metrolink and Junction 9 of the M60) T: 0161 836 4000 E: iwmnorth@iwm.org.uk www.iwm.org.uk

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch with six floors of exhibitions and displays; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.