



FRIENDS

New exhibition
**FASHION ON
THE RATION:**
1940s Street Style



Despatches

£4 Free to Friends of IWM



Four young ladies enjoy a stroll in the sunshine along a shopping street in the West End of London during 1941.

IWM D 2937 Ministry of Information Photo Division Photographer

Author **Julie Summers** writes about the background to her book and IWM London's exhibition

FASHION ON THE RATION 1940s Street Style

When I was asked to write an article for *Despatches*, I thought it might be interesting to take the title of this book and exhibition very literally and talk about 'fashion' and 'ration'. Fashion, in this instance, is represented by the outerwear; and ration by the government's limitations on all clothing, once Utility was introduced in 1942, but particularly underwear.

As I began working through the fashion magazines of the 1940s, it became evident that some editors regarded the war years as stagnant for clothing design. 'Fashion... is now out of fashion' wrote the editor of *Harper's Bazaar* in the summer of 1942, and the following year the focus for women's magazines was the government's 'Make Do and Mend' campaign. The emphasis was on patching, improvising and making clothes last. Coats could be altered to become dresses and pyjama tops to become blazers.

In April 1943, *Vogue* advised its readers to purchase a grey flannel suit which could be dressed with scarves and different blouses to make nine different outfits: 'of course, for it's Utility, if not austerity, all the way now', the editor rued. It was inventive, but not necessarily stylish. For women who were tired after four years of war, it must have at times been depressing not to have been able to refresh their wardrobes as they would have wished.

Counting precious clothing coupons and mending clothes became a way of life. Muriel Redman, who worked for the BBC's

The Listener magazine and who kept a diary throughout the war, wrote of her stockings on 27 November 1942: 'Many of them I would have thrown away three years ago, but today their price is above rubies'.

But was fashion really 'out of fashion'? I was not so sure, and it was with a sense of excitement that I discovered the opposite to be true, even if the British public could not benefit from it in the way that they might have expected. Given that one's impression of the government during the war is to some extent of a huge bureaucratic machine that had unprecedented control over people's lives, two somewhat surprising things happened mid-way through the conflict.

The first was that London's top designers, which by the end of 1940 included some of those who had been working in Paris in the 1930s, were invited to design a collection for a fashion show in South America. The reasons for this were first to bring in much-needed foreign currency, but secondly to showcase British fashion in the absence of

Paris on the world stage, as France was under occupation. Held in 1941 and showcasing Britain's finest couturiers, it was an outstanding success.

It is recorded in the *History of Civil Industry and Trade* by Hargreaves and Gowing that Britain's fashion exports increased well over five-fold during the Second World War, from £98,000 in 1938 to £507,000 in 1946, which latter amount is equivalent to approximately £20 million in 2015. The designers came together at the suggestion of Harry Yoxall, the managing director of Condé Nast and the original founder of British *Vogue* (established in London in 1916), to form the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers (IncSoc). IncSoc's aim was to support and promote British fashion abroad and was considered a success by the fashion press, but was nevertheless unpopular because the clothes were not available to the general public.

The introduction of clothes rationing in June 1941 was followed in 1942 by Utility and then austerity restrictions on design, which led the fashion editor of *Vogue* to remark in the November 1944 issue: 'One has only to see a collection designed for export, and the same collection toned down to comply with austerity at home, to realise how much fashion value has been lost in the process.'

Two years earlier, members of IncSoc were engaged by the Board of Trade to design clothes for the Utility programme that was rolled out over that year (and →



Fashion on the Ration by Julie Summers, published in association with IWM, is available from IWM Shops, £16.99. Friends receive a 10% discount. www.iwmshop.org.uk

→ only ended in 1952). In what can only be described as a highly imaginative move, designers Edward Molyneux (who had escaped from France in 1940), Hardy Amies, Norman Hartnell, Bianca Mosca and others were each asked to create four garments to be unveiled in the autumn of 1942.

These outfits would have to conform to the strict limitations set by the Board of Trade for the length of skirts, the number of pleats and buttons, the amount of material for men's shirts and socks, and even down to the detail of turn-ups. The banning of the latter was exceptionally unpopular and Hugh Dalton, president of the Board of Trade, found himself defending trousers without turn-ups both in parliament and in the press:

Permanent turn-ups on trousers have

been prohibited since May 1942. This was done to save an entirely justifiable waste of cloth. In making this and other clothing regulations I was advised by the trade. The economy of materials due to the prohibition of turn-ups runs into the millions of square feet per year. Even if the saving were less than it is, it would still be our duty to make it.

The fashion editors were pleased with the Utility range designed by London's finest couturiers. The *Daily Mail* cheered: 'Suburban wives and factory girls will soon be able to wear clothes designed and styled by the Queen's dressmaker.' The *News Chronicle* was equally impressed: 'Before long the society woman who pays 30 guineas for a frock will share her dress designer with the factory girl who pays 30 shillings.' Once the general public had

got used to the idea of Utility clothing, they too were generally happy with it.

While the outerwear available under the Utility scheme was by and large acceptable, undergarments and stockings were a problem. In fact, the silk stocking, banned from sale to the public in October 1940, became one of the most missed articles of women's dress during the war. The rayon stockings which replaced them were never produced in sufficient numbers and the lisle Utility stockings were hardly a worthy replacement. These were loathed with a vengeance. Rose Cottrell, a young woman working in London, wrote to her sister in Switzerland in December 1941:

The papers warned us that they would wrinkle round the instep, would not be fashioned and what not else. I saw some of them on a model in Medhursts and my word they are awful. If they can't look nice on a stocking model in a shop window, you can bet they don't stand much chance on a leg.

Lisle stockings were the bugbear of women all over Britain. They sagged at the ankle and lost their shape at the knee. Flo Hyatt, another correspondent whose letters to her aunt are stored in IWM's Documents Section, wrote in September 1943: 'Utility stockings make you shudder. They bag everywhere they shouldn't and the heels have a habit of showing a line where the lisle joins the rayon of a lighter shade which gives a very ugly effect.'

The influx of American servicemen bringing gifts of nylons later in the war helped some way in assuaging the thirst for silken elegance, but they never met the needs of every woman who required them. The number of tales of woe recorded in diaries, letters and memoirs attest to this. It is hard to imagine from today's perspective what an enormous impact the lack of stockings had on women at almost every level of society. To go without, initially at least, was deemed shocking in the same way as trousers for women were considered eccentric.

However, the fashion editors soon realised that the shortages meant that a creative solution would have to be found. *Vogue* magazine, in an article entitled 'Sock Shock!' advised women it was acceptable to go bare-legged and wear ankle socks with flat shoes. Some women bought creams advertised in the women's press. One, manufactured by Cyclax and

advertised in *Vogue* in July 1940, made extravagant claims to be 'so incredibly real in its likeness to the sheerest, most luxurious stockings that only touch can reveal the illusion!' Others opted for home-made solutions such as tea or gravy to stain their legs.

Not everyone was prepared to be broad-minded about bare legs. The chancellor of Leeds University told the trade publication *The Drapers' Record* in June 1941: 'There is a strong feeling that women students should not be permitted to attend the university without stockings'. A year later, Hugh Dalton was in more conciliatory mood. He had received a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, complaining that there had been a two-thirds reduction in the amount of material supplied to the church furnishing houses. Dalton agreed to look into the problem if the archbishop in turn would agree to announce that women could go to church 'without impropriety, hatless and stockingless'.

This was a major concession, and to get some idea of how sensitive a question it was, a civil servant called Metford Watkins was named in the *Daily Herald* as 'The Man Who Upset Whitehall' because he advised government departments in the autumn of 1941 that they should allow their women staff to wear slacks 'so that they could economise on stockings'.

That the government should take such an interest in what people wore under next to their skin is extraordinary. But the fact is that there were civil servants tasked with specifying weights and measurements to the most precise degree. William Buller Fagg was a civil servant at the Board of Trade with responsibility for the distribution of 200 million clothing coupons in 1941. His remarkable archive and personal correspondence, which is now in the care of IWM's Documents Section, shows the human face of the monumental bureaucracy around clothes rationing and underwear in particular.

One of his files deals with the question of corsets. These were a constant source of shame and concern for the Board of Trade. Only 9 to 10 million were manufactured per year during the war, while by the board's own figures at least 18 million women in the country wore corsets. It was not, as one might imagine, just women of

IWM D 176 Ministry of Information Photo Division Photographer



An ARP ambulance volunteer applies her lipstick between emergency calls.

middle years who relied on corsets to keep their figures in shape. The War Office announced in 1940 that women who had enrolled in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) 'must be corseted and corseted correctly'. This applied to women in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) and the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, known popularly as Wrens) as well.

Frederick R Burley was asked to design a corset that would, as the *Picture Post* reported in March 1940, 'preserve the feminine line, and at the same time be practical under a uniform'. The new 'Berlei' design dispensed with metal and was made of elastic, firm lace, net, satin and cotton batiste to give directional control. This was an ideal undergarment for those young women whose uniforms had skirts.

It also had the added benefit of a pocket where loose change for a bus fare or a handkerchief could be kept. Women in the services were not allowed to carry handbags, nor were they allowed to wear jewellery or accessories to enhance their uniforms. It was not considered safe to carry loose change in jacket pockets as they could be easily picked, especially in the blackout, so the pockets were popular as they were hard to reach without the wearer noticing.

The main issue for the manufacturers of corsets was that they required a skilled workforce, many of whom had switched to war production in areas such as parachute manufacture. Furthermore, three of the constituent materials for corsets – rubber, steel and cotton – were rendered rare by the exigencies of war. The issue of corsets was not resolved until almost the end of the war and was almost as knotty a problem for women as stockings.

Underwear was regulated and exact proportions of leg width, gusset and design were carefully specified, whether for French knickers or close-fitting briefs, bras or corsets. By 1942, women's underwear producers were permitted to work on only six templates for knickers every year, and although colour was not restricted, economies of scale meant there was little choice other than peach, cream, white or green for briefs and uniform shades such as khaki, blue or grey for over-knickers made of wool or flannel. These last were hated by the young →

Although certain design details were forbidden as they were a waste of valuable raw materials, wartime austerity fashions were not drab, as this purple, green and mauve dress (which required seven clothing coupons), designed by Norman Hartnell, testifies. The model is standing on a windy rooftop in Bloomsbury, London. Senate House, the headquarters of the Ministry of Information, is clearly visible behind her.



IWM D 14820 Ministry of Information Photo Division Photographer

→ women in the forces, many of whom admitted only wearing 'passion-killers' for kit muster inspections or their annual medical check.

Very occasionally a woman was lucky enough to acquire a piece of celanese or, even better, real silk. One such young lady was Miss Patricia, later Countess, Mountbatten. While serving as a nineteen-year-old Wren in 1943 she was given (by a boyfriend in the RAF) one of the silk maps issued in case of being shot down over Europe. She had the map made up into a bra and pants set, with the Gulf of Venezia on the front of the beautifully hand-stitched cami-knickers. As there was no elastic available, both garments had small cream buttons and a tiny 22-inch waist size.

Eileen Gurney made bras for her neighbour and decorated her own underwear with bits of leftover lace to make them less Utility. Eileen's letters to her husband John form an important collection in the Department of Documents and give a picture of an industrious and inventive woman typical of many of the era. She wrote on the day that clothes rationing was announced in June 1941:

I've got heaps of materials and all sorts of old things I can renovate. Although I can't be as well dressed as a girl who spends lots of money on her clothes, I'm second to none when it comes to dressing for nothing, and looking well turned out in renovation, wangles and oddments pinched from your old suits.

This spirit of inventiveness and determination not to be defeated by the limitations of clothes rationing was the clear message that came through all the diaries, letters and memoirs I read for *Fashion on the Ration*. I came to the conclusion that if fashion on the home front stagnated during the war, creativity did not; and creativity is the spirit of fashion.

I enjoyed researching and writing this book. I had very generous help from IWM and also from the donors of important collections to the archives. Without these vitally important diaries, letters and documents, the social history of the Second World War would be very much the poorer.

Below: This photograph, taken in 1943, shows a model wearing a black woollen Utility dress made by Atrima. Purchasing this dress required 11 clothing coupons.

Laura Clouting and Amanda Mason, historians at IWM London, reveal how this extraordinary exhibition was created

Creativity and coping in the face of adversity

IWM D 14826



Second World War clothing provides an extraordinary insight into everyday life and the struggles of a nation throughout this turbulent time for the British population. This is the focus of IWM

London's headline exhibition for the spring and summer, *Fashion on the Ration: 1940s Street Style*. Through the prism of clothing, the exhibition gives a fresh take on what life was like for those at work or at home during the war, or for those in the military or civilian voluntary services.

Fashion on the Ration explores intensely personal aspects of wartime life: what did people wear and how did it shape their sense of identity? How was fashion constrained by war? How did men, women and children cope with the demands and deprivations of shortages and austerity? It may come as a surprise to see how

fashion survived and even flourished in wartime, as British people demonstrated remarkable ingenuity in renovating, recycling and creating their own clothes. Creativity and coping in adversity are integral to *Fashion on the Ration's* narrative.

Work began behind the scenes in late 2013 and continued at pace throughout 2014 as IWM London reopened with our

new First World War Galleries and rejuvenated atrium spaces. The intent for *Fashion on the Ration's* exhibition space and graphic design was to create an experience that rudders the narrative and objects in a bright and energetic approach.

The curatorial team delved through IWM's incredible collections, most especially our vast store of uniform and civilian clothing. Only a small portion is on display across our branches at any one time, so this was an excellent opportunity to surprise our visitors with the richness of what we have. The collection continues to evolve and IWM will display the highlights of a notable donation of wartime civilian clothing from the collectors Frederic and Jean Sharf, never before seen on public display.

The exhibition makes the most of our documents, photographs, oral history and film archives, together with an array of library-held fashion magazines as well as our art section's paintings and posters. Audiovisual elements provide a striking visual dimension to the story of wartime clothing.

Fashion on the Ration also draws upon several loan items from institutions like the V&A, with its prestigious collection of textiles, to private lenders with deeply personal stories revealed through clothing or accessories. Our Director-General Diane Lees has also passed on a family treasure in the form of a bracelet made in the spirit of 'Make Do and Mend'.

IWM UNI 14393 ANDREW TUNNARD



Making your own clothes was usually cheaper and needed fewer coupons than buying ready-made garments. This two-piece suit in a fabric printed with images of knitting needles and wool was made by a skilled home sewer.

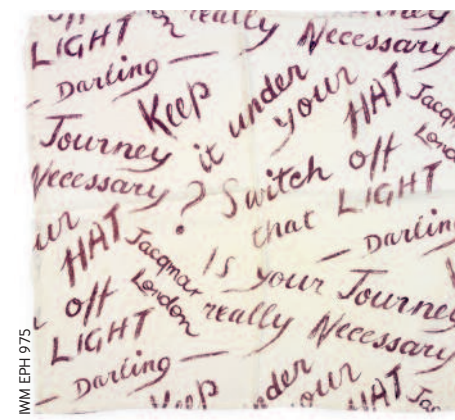
It was owned by her great aunt, Marjorie Gilman, who worked in an aircraft factory. The factory's female workers sought out scraps of plastic to turn into accessories. With a dash of panache, Marjorie's husband Jack later replaced the rivet detailing with glass stones and she wore the bracelet into the 1960s.

The exhibition follows the development of fashion from the war's beginning through to its end, split into six main areas. The first of these, *Into Uniform*, shows how Britain's visual landscape immediately changed as people took on roles within the military, auxiliary and civilian voluntary services. New roles meant the issue of uniforms to signify responsibility, from full regalia to simple armbands.

The style of military dress was of interest to the fashion conscious. Of the women's services, the Women's Royal Naval Service uniform was the most admired and this no doubt helped recruitment. Petty jealousies erupted, with a soldier's practical but dowdy uniform comparing unfavourably to the RAF uniform with its dash of style. Airmen were dismissively known as the 'Brylcreem boys', thanks to their lavish use of the hair product.

For those not in uniform, the war still changed how they dressed at work and at home. *Functional Fashion* reveals that practicality was essential for wartime clothing, but also how it was still possible to retain an air of elegance. A range of →

Switch Off That Light. A home front-themed Jacquemar scarf, featuring just some of the many messages and instructions aimed at the British public during the Second World War.



IWM EPH 975

→ fashionable luminous accessories were quickly produced so that people could be seen and safe in the blackout, which had caused a sharp rise in collisions. Handbags with compartments to carry a respirator were produced as a stylish solution to the grave threat of gas warfare.

Deadly aerial bombing raids claimed the lives of 43,000 people during the Blitz of 1940 and 1941 alone, injuring many more. Late night dashes to cold garden air raid shelters could be made more comfortable in an all-in-one garment called a 'siren suit'. At home or in industrial workplaces, overalls and housecoats were worn to protect clothes that people wanted to keep in good condition. The trend for functional fashion led to increasing numbers of women wearing trousers and turbans.

Fashion clearly responded to the war's explicit dangers. But clothing, and peoples' entire attitudes towards dress, changed on a sweeping level as the war invaded aspects of everyday life. The exhibition section *Rationing and Make Do and Mend* explores how government intervention became far-reaching, in order to commandeer resources for the war effort and to protect the supply of civilian essentials. This included the clothing people wore.

Fabric was appropriated for the fighting. Its many uses included serge for uniforms and ubiquitous cotton for items as varied as tarpaulins and tyres. The government wanted to reduce the production of civilian clothes to safeguard raw materials, and to release workers and factory space for armaments or aircraft production. Winston Churchill was initially hostile to the idea of clothes rationing, imagining people dressed in 'rags and tatters', but the scheme commenced on 1 June 1941.

New clothes now had to be bought with coupons as well as money. Garments and footwear were allocated a points value set by how much material and labour went into their manufacture. Every adult

IWM UNI 12755 ANDREW TUNNARD



Above: The Women's Royal Naval Service officer's uniform was a source of envy and considered more attractive than those of the other services like the Auxiliary Territorial Service, which was branded 'hideous' by the novelist Barbara Cartland.

Below: Men released from military service were entitled to a new set of coupon-free clothes as part of the demobilisation process. This is a typical example of a man's 'demob suit'.



IWM UNI 2964 ANDREW TUNNARD

could now only buy the equivalent of around one new outfit a year. The allocation reduced as the war went on. Rationing forced people to be painfully mathematical in working out how to spend their clothing coupons – and to find shrewd ways to avoid doing so.

The 'Make Do and Mend' campaign encouraged people to make their existing supplies of clothes last longer. Imaginative use of materials, as well as recycling and renovating old clothes, meant people could save their precious clothing coupons. Old blankets and unrationed blackout curtains were transformed into dresses. Suits left behind by serving soldiers became their wives' skirts and jackets.

When people did go to the shops to buy new clothes, from 1942 they were presented with a range of efficiently produced, quality- and price-controlled clothing. The exhibition section devoted to *Utility Fashions* is dominated by a dramatic open-plinth display of a colourful array of this attire. The aim of the Utility scheme was to improve the efficiency of clothing production, and to make price-regulated clothing from a range of strictly-specified fabrics affordable for all.

There were fears over the inelegant-sounding Utility. But leading designers like Hardy Amies and Norman Hartnell were recruited to design prototype ranges. Celebrity endorsement was lent by the likes of Deborah Kerr to prove how stylish and varied these clothes could be. Its key selling point, however, was its durability and robustness at a time when clothes had to last.

Arguably, the clean, simple chic of 1940s clothing – the popularity of which endures today – owed its existence to scarcity of supplies. Designers had to work within austerity regulations that restricted the amount of fabric that could be used in any garment. This limited the use of pleats, pockets, trimmings and trouser turn-ups. Men particularly suffered as a result of scarce supplies of

rubber, with many bemoaning the 1943 ban of elastic in all garments except women's corsets and knickers.

In wartime Britain it became unfashionable to be seen wearing clothes that were obviously showy. Yet there was also real concern that a lack of interest in personal appearance could be a sign of low morale. The exhibition area *Beauty as Duty* explores the decision to continue with the manufacture of cosmetics, though in much-reduced quantities. With a made-up face and a smart hair style, a woman could still feel well-dressed and stylish, even if her clothes were last season's, her stockings darned and accessories home-made. People found other ways to show support for the war effort through personal style by wearing fabrics and scarves featuring patriotic slogans and motifs.

IWM London marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1945 with the *Fashion on the Ration* exhibition. This significant milestone reminds us of a profound moment of transition between living under the shadow of war and the promise of peacetime life ahead, which is explored in the final area, *Peace and a 'New Look'*.

By 1945, British people had grown tired of rationing and 'Make Do and Mend'. Advertisements promised new styles, but often shops remained bare. Production of clothes and other civilian goods did increase, but most of what was made was exported. Clothes rationing – albeit in reduced form – continued until 1949. The best-dressed were those leaving the military services. Demobilised men were issued with a full set of clothes – the 'demob suit'. Reactions varied. Although there was some degree of choice, and quality could be very good, many simply felt that they had swapped one uniform for another.

In 1947, the fashion world was shaken by the launch in Paris of Christian Dior's 'New Look'. Epitomised by tiny corseted

A woman models a Utility outfit in this publicity photograph.



IWM D14790

waists and long, full skirts, the style was at odds with continued austerity and it immediately divided opinion. But eventually the New Look transcended the British high street as civilians, irritated and exhausted by austerity, sought escape from fashion on the ration.

The exhibition ends on a note of reflection. Experts on fashion and the history of dress give their thoughts on the legacy of 1940s fashion in a large-scale audiovisual film. The designer Wayne Hemingway and the BBC's *Great British Sewing Bee* judge Patrick Grant are just some of the talking heads who discuss the legacies, similarities – and some of the stark differences – between fashion then and now. This feature marks the end of an exhibition that shows how wartime clothing can tell us so much about what it was like to live through one of the most challenging and trying times in British history.

Fashion on the Ration: 1940s Street Style is at IWM London until 31 August 2015, open daily (except 25, 26 December) 10am to 6pm, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ.

'This exhibition shows how wartime clothing can tell us so much about what it was like to live through one of the most challenging and trying times in British history.'



IWM DC 3867

Left: View of the outskirts of Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, 2014.

Below: A British mentor teaches troops of the Afghan National Army (ANA) how to use mortars at Camp Shorabak, Helmand, 2013.



IWM DC 2696

Afghanistan: a country in transition

IWM Historian **Matt Brosnan** gives an overview of *War Story: Afghanistan 2014*, a new exhibition at IWM London, with pictures by IWM Photographer **Richard Ash**.

The end of 2014 marks the withdrawal of British and international combat troops from Afghanistan after thirteen years of war. While this is a significant step, it does not mean a neat conclusion to the conflict or the end of British and international involvement in the country.

Instead it represents a transition, as Afghanistan takes more control of its own affairs. The future of the country is delicately poised, with uncertainty over Afghanistan's continued stability. The latest War Story display – the third in a series exploring British experiences in Afghanistan and the nature of the conflict – provides a snapshot of

Afghanistan at this transitional point.

The war in Afghanistan began in 2001, following the 11 September attacks on the USA carried out by al-Qaeda terrorists. The initial aims were to target al-Qaeda and remove the extreme Islamist Taliban regime in Afghanistan that harboured them. Both of these were achieved in a rapid military campaign by coalition troops, predominantly from the USA and Britain. However, expanded NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) involvement in the conflict meant a longer-term commitment to Afghanistan and soon after the regime was removed, Taliban insurgents began to regenerate.

From 2006 to 2012, the war increased in violence. For British troops stationed in Helmand Province in the south of the country, many of the places they served – Sangin, Musa Qala, Now Zad, Nad Ali, Lashkar Gah – became bywords for intense fighting. For British troops on the ground, this often involved patrolling areas threatened by Taliban fighters who could seemingly melt in and out of their surroundings, as well as encountering the hidden dangers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Since the beginning of the conflict over 450 British service personnel have died in Afghanistan, the majority killed during this intense period. ➔

Cadets of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army parade at the Central Military Academy, Chengtu, Szechuan, China, 1944.



CECIL BEATON

THEATRE OF WAR

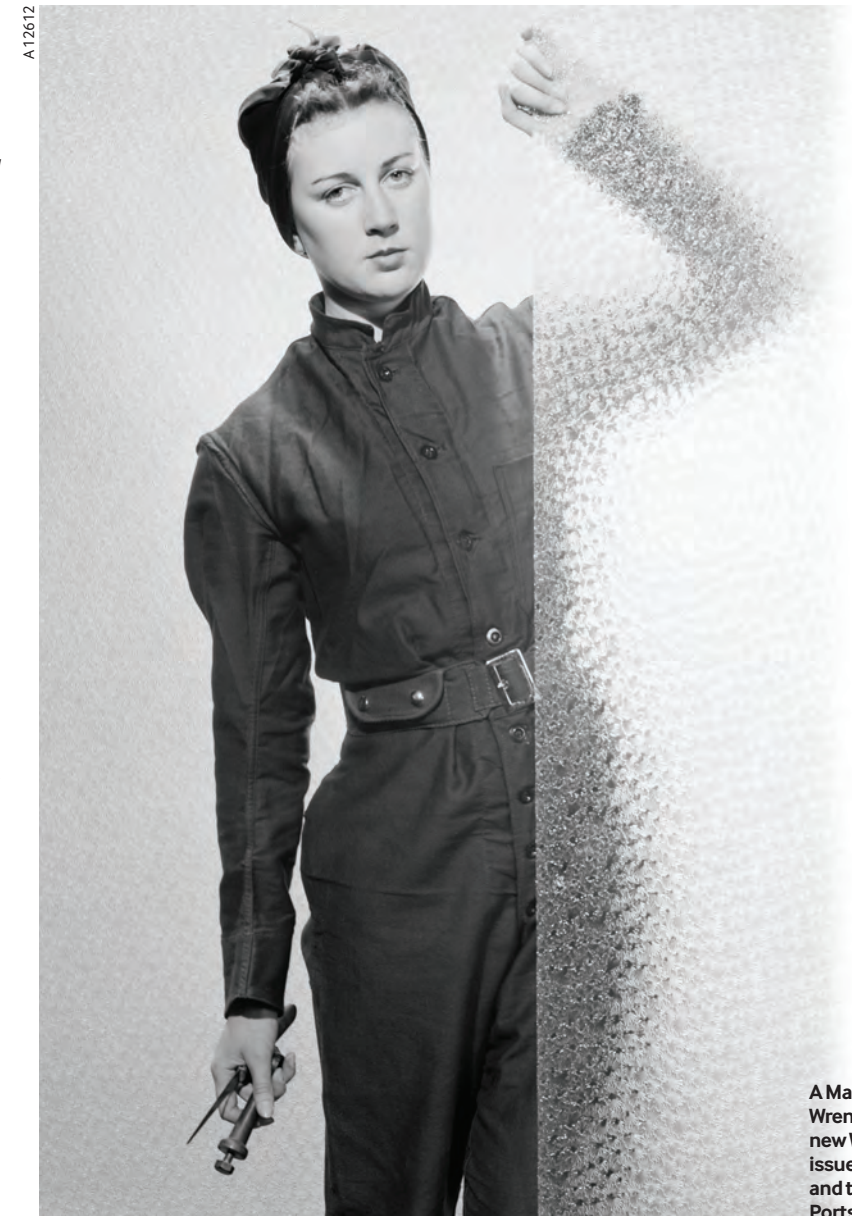
Sir Cecil Beaton is best remembered as a portrait and fashion photographer, but during the Second World War he was one of Britain's hardest working war photographers. **Hilary Roberts** previews a new exhibition at IWM London which looks at the work he produced as an official photographer for the Ministry of Information.

"This war, as far as I can see, is something specifically designed to show up my inadequacy in every possible capacity. It's doubtful if I'd be much good at camouflage – in any case my repeated requests to join have been met with, "You'll be called if you're wanted." What else can I do?"

Cecil Beaton, September 1939

Cecil Beaton (1904-1980) was a British designer, writer, cartoonist, diarist and socialite who loved theatre in all its forms. However, he is best remembered as the leading British portrait and fashion photographer of his day. Beaton's glamorous, elaborately staged photographs of royalty and twentieth century celebrities reflected his theatrical tastes and were published in magazines, newspapers and books throughout the world. The fact that he was one of Britain's hardest working war photographers during the Second World War is less well known. As an official photographer for the British Ministry of Information, Beaton travelled far and wide to document the impact of war on people and places in his own unique style. In later life, Beaton came to regard his war photographs as his single most important body of photographic work.

The eldest child of a prosperous timber merchant, Cecil Beaton had a comfortable childhood which was firmly rooted in the Edwardian era. Socially and professionally ambitious, his abilities as a photographer, artist, designer and writer were evident from an early age. Beaton himself attributed the origins of his interest in photography and the theatre to a →



A Maintenance Wren models the new WRNS official issue boiler suit and turban, Portsmouth, 1942.

MIKE MOORE
LEE CRAKER

Perspectives on Iraq 1991 – 2011

Curator **Hilary Roberts**
on a new exhibition at IWM
London showcasing the
work of photographers
Mike Moore and Lee Craker.

The dome of
Shahid Mosque
photographed
against a backdrop
of oil fires. The fires
were lit by Iraqis in
an attempt to
confuse Coalition
bombers. Baghdad,
March 2003. Photo:
Mike Moore.



MIKE MOORE ©MIRRORPIX / THE DAILY MIRROR



Save the Wheat and Help the Fleet, Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd, litho, London, 1917. German U-boats threatened to starve Britain of food and supplies.

Art. IWM PST4470

The Imperial War Museum was founded to make sure that we never forget what it is like to live in a world torn apart by conflict. Over the coming months and years, with the First World War Centenary upon us, IWM will be in the spotlight as never before.

Our visitors and the media are keenly anticipating what form the galleries will take, what objects we will show and what we will say about them. I know that IWM Friends will be particularly eager to learn what you can expect to find and I would like to take this opportunity to give you an outline of the galleries as well as an insight into some of the thinking behind them.

We began working on the galleries over four years ago, when a small team of IWM historians and curators was brought together to see the project through from concept to realisation of the galleries. Our first task was to map out a storyline for them, to give the most devastating conflict in Britain's history a fresh perspective which has historical integrity and is relevant, engaging and illuminating for all our visitors. Audience research showed that we needed to answer four important questions: Why did the war begin? Why did it continue? How did the Allies win? What was the impact of the war?

In accordance with IWM's remit, we set out to answer these questions from a British and Empire perspective. We were also determined to ensure that the home front story was woven into the narrative. After all, this was a conflict that was fought by whole societies – not just by soldiers, but by the men, women and children at home who supplied and supported them. Over many weeks, we considered what form the story should take. The fruits of our debates and deliberations were translated into the fourteen main Story areas in the new galleries, each of which has a number of Substories. A board of distinguished academic advisers, chaired by IWM Trustee Professor Sir Hew Strachan, helped us to chart our way through some of the more difficult waters as we refined and polished our narrative.

When we had agreed upon a framework for the galleries, we began to carry out a trawl of the collections and to plot objects large and small into the spaces. As you know, IWM's First World War collections are unrivalled in their breadth and depth and the selection process was challenging. We looked at weaponry. We examined uniforms and equipment. We read thousands of letters and diaries. We pored

over pamphlets and posters, photographs and works of art. We watched hours of film. Our curatorial teams offered up recommendations and stories to streamline and guide our thinking. The final selection which you will see in the galleries comprises 1,300 items from our collections. They range from military hardware, uniforms and equipment to intensely personal items. Some objects will be familiar to you, many of them not. What they have in common is that they all have powerful stories to tell, not only of destruction and loss, but also of endurance, innovation, courage, duty and devotion.

As we looked at the objects, we also had to think about how and what we would say about them. We had to bear in mind that these would be the first galleries at IWM to show events outside living memory, and to consider what that meant for our audiences. When the Imperial War Museum opened in June 1920, King George V declared that the new museum would remember 'common effort and common sacrifice'. For the first visitors to the new museum, the war was not history but the recent past. The exhibits needed little interpretation because those →

Commemorating the First World War

IWM London's new First World War Galleries will open to the public on 19 July 2014. **James Taylor**, IWM's Head of Research and Information, describes the journey from their inception to completion.

First World War 'On War Service' badge issued by the Ministry of Munitions.



IWM INS 7167

A lasting impact

14-18 NOW is a major cultural programme taking place across the United Kingdom to mark the centenary of the First World War. During the summer of 2014 it launched its first series of events. 14-18 NOW's Director, **Jenny Waldman**, reflects on the programme so far.

1 spectra by Ryoji Ikeda, 2014, view from Primrose Hill by Thierry Bal. Produced and presented by Artangel, co-commissioned by 14-18 NOW and the Mayor of London.

Poems from the Front

Shakespeare and Byron both had to wait over a hundred years before they had a memorial stone in Poets' Corner, which shows just how remarkable it is that Robert Graves was honoured there while he was still alive. In November 1985, a month before Graves died, the then Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes, unveiled a memorial stone on which is carved the names of sixteen poets who served in the First World War. Graves was among them, along with his friends Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden and Wilfred Owen.

The fact that Westminster Abbey couldn't wait for the last of them to die before installing the memorial is an indication of how the poetry of the First World War has established a unique hold on our collective imagination. In the words of a more recent Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, the poetry of the First World War has become an almost sacred national text.

When I have lectured about war poetry abroad in places such as China or parts of Europe, students are intrigued by what they tend to see as a uniquely British literary phenomenon. When I tell them that, after Shakespeare, the war poets can be among

Professor Paul O'Prey on the poetry of the First World War.

the poets most likely to be studied by British schoolchildren, they look bemused. I think some of them assume that I'm going to talk about patriotic celebrations of great heroism; or maybe they have in mind something like Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade'. When we come to read Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg and others, they're surprised to find that these poems have the power to fire their own imaginations and demand their full attention.

Graves said that he wrote his early war poems to show the 'ignorant' people back home in Britain what the war was really like. Frustrated by what he read in newspapers ('rosy official accounts of execrable battles') and irritated by the unthinking support for the war that he encountered when he went back home on leave, he wanted to shine an 'unofficial light' on the horrors he saw in the trenches. His initial response to the war included a rather graphic poem describing 'A Dead Boche',

though as the war progressed he developed a more personal and thoughtful tone. Wilfred Owen put it a different way, saying that all a poet in his situation could do was 'to tell the truth and to warn'.

Poets like Graves, Owen and Sassoon are sometimes accused of having an undue influence on shaping the way we now view the First World War. It is a commonly-heard lament that schoolchildren seem more inclined to listen to the poets rather than the historians, who in turn argue that the war is more complex and more subtle than the one decried by Siegfried Sassoon, with his mutinous contempt for buffoonish generals.

Graves would no doubt be surprised to hear that the poems he and his friends wrote in the heat of battle are still considered problematic with regard to how 'official' Britain considers the war in which they fought. But he would also, I think, have some sympathy with Jeremy Paxman, an historian of the war who also loves its poetry, who recently warned that a diet that consisted only of Owen and Sassoon would focus too much on a narrative of horror and pointless sacrifice at the expense of any wider and more balanced interpretation of the conflict.

The answer to this is not to stop teaching or reading Sassoon and Owen, but to establish a wider and more balanced view of the poetry written during the war, as well as a greater understanding of the men and women who wrote it. The attitude to the war expressed in the best poetry written at the front is wide-ranging, complex and frequently ambiguous. In other words, it reflects the varied range of experience of a great many of the people who were there.

Some of the poets were officers, while others were privates, nurses, medical orderlies and chaplains. They saw the war from very different angles, though there are some common themes in the poems they wrote to describe their experiences. There is, for example, no hatred of the enemy; rather a deep bond of compassion and humanity with others caught up in the war. There is a great yearning for peace, friendship and the consoling beauty of the natural world.

David Jones, for example, served as a →



Siegfried Sassoon

Robert Graves

Mary Borden

Mary Borden, extract from 'Come to me quickly...'

I am suffocating –
I cannot get away –
They cling to my skirts, my arms
My hands –
They clutch at my strength
They call my name – They keep calling me.
They cry to me to undo their pain and let them free – I cannot set them free.
They throw themselves onto my breast, to die –
I cannot even let them die –
Come to me for one hour, strong, clean – whole –
Their wounds gape at me –
Their stumps menace me –
Their bandaged faces grimace at me
Their death rattle curses me –
Give me rest – Make me clean –
I am stained – I am soiled –
I am streaked with their blood –
I am soaked with the odor of the oozing of their wounds –
I am saturated with the poison of their poor festering wounds –
I am poisoned – I'm infected – I shall never wash it off –
But you are clean –
Your face is cold and fresh and wet by the rain –
Let me drink the fresh moisture of your face with my lips –
Your garments are electric with the wild blowing wind –
Put your gallant cloak about me –
Let me breathe, Let me breathe.

Art and conflict in a media age



COLLECTION IWM © KENNARDPHILLIPPS



COLLECTION IWM © STEVE MCQUEEN. PRESENTED BY THE ART FUND

Curator **Sara Bevan** gives an insight into a new exhibition at IWM North, showcasing IWM’s contemporary art collection

What do artists contribute to our perceptions of war and conflict in a time when our general understanding of conflict is increasingly shaped by the media and the internet?

Working outside the pressures of journalism, artists can propose ideas, urging the viewer to think deeply about what war is, about its immediate impact, its long-term repercussions and how we remember it. They invite us to consider our definition of conflict in a time when war no longer has easily-defined geographical limits. Often taking their personal history as a starting point, many artists navigate this broad-ranging subject matter as observers, activists or philosophers.

At a time when there is a growing emphasis on the media spectacle and an

expectation of immediate access to events as they unfold, our new exhibition *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* takes works from IWM’s unique art collection and explores the rich, varied and moving artistic response to conflict in a media age.

Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War is on display until 23 February 2014 at IWM North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ. Open daily (except 24, 25, 26 December) 10am to 6pm (1 March to 31 October) and 10am to 5pm (1 November to 28 February)

Opposite page:	Above:	Right:
<i>Photo Op</i> , kennardphillipps, 2007.	<i>Queen and Country</i> , Steve McQueen, 2006.	<i>Cyanotype [RAF Sock]</i> , Annabel Dover, 2010.



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