

Rationing Trail

The information in *italics* does not appear on the students' print out.

1. Imported goods



Make your way to the back of the exhibition space and look out for the tank.
Find Silo 4: *Empire, Commonwealth and War*.

Look inside and find the case called 'Working for Victory' containing the model ship.

Before and during both world wars, Britain brought in food and other supplies from abroad.



This photograph shows a lady working in Barbados. She is collecting sugar canes which are grown there.

Sugar was sent to other countries like Britain during the Second World War.

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Look at the items in the cabinet to identify three other things that were brought into Britain from other countries.

Clue: Read the framed scroll

Your group can look at the text panel to the right of the cabinet and at the written descriptions of each object to help them answer this question.

How do you think these items were transported to Britain?

Merchant ships carried supplies to Britain across the sea. Britain's merchant fleet was the largest in the world during both world wars. Around a quarter of Britain's merchant sailors during the Second World War came from within the British Empire, including from Africa, Hong Kong and India.



Next, find the start of the '1939-1945 Second World War' section of our timeline.

Nearby you will see a very large, round object made from metal.

Draw it here:

What is it? *Sea Mine*

What might happen to ships carrying supplies to Britain in the Second World War because of this device?

Sea mines in the two world wars sank hundreds of ships and caused significant loss of life. Many of the ships destroyed by mines would have been carrying goods essential for Britain's war effort.



It soon became very difficult to bring in food and supplies by ship. This meant that Britain had to introduce rationing.

What is rationing?

Rationing was a government scheme to cope with shortages in essential items such as food and clothes. Every person received a ration book containing coupons which had to be given to the retailer when paying for items, to ensure a fair distribution of goods. Food rationing began in January 1940 and ended in June 1954.

2. Food rationing

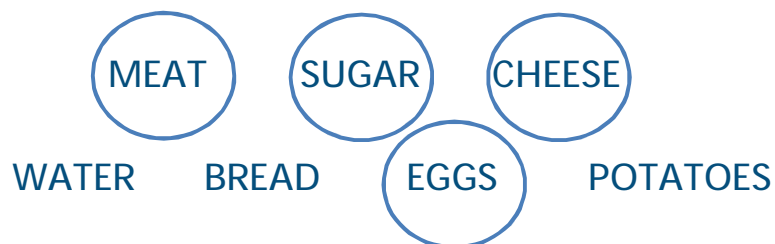


We are going to look at some items that were affected by rationing in the Second World War.

Find the case 'War Effort 1939 – 1945' in the Second World War section of the Timeline.

Can you find the food ration books?

Using the ration book to help you, circle the foods below that were rationed during the Second World War.



NB. Bread was not rationed during the Second World War but was briefly rationed afterwards.



Did you know that just because an item was not rationed, this did not mean that it was easy to buy?



This photograph shows people queuing up to buy fresh fish.

It was also difficult to buy things like bread, fruit and vegetables.

Sometimes people waited for a long time in the queue only to find that the shopkeeper had sold out.



Look for object number 7 in the cabinet.

Why do you think the eggs are in a tin?

The eggs were imported from America. Dried eggs keep much longer than fresh eggs and were easier to transport.

What other items were rationed as well as food?

Look in the case for clues.

There are clothing ration books in the cabinet. Other items that were rationed include soap and petrol. Even hot bath water was restricted to 5 inches (just under 13 cm) deep to save fuel.

If someone wanted to buy furniture they had to fill in a form and wait for a permit to buy it – people whose property had been lost or damaged in air raids received priority.

3. Clothes rationing



In 1941 you received **33 clothing coupons** for the first six months of the year. The suit below would have used **18 coupons**.



A young model poses on a small flight of steps in the Bloomsbury area to show off her checked suit.

Read the information about object number 2 in the case.

If you bought the suit in the photograph and a pair of adult slippers, how many coupons would you have used?

$$18 + 5 = 23$$

Of your **33 coupons**, how many would you have left?

$$33 - 23 = 10$$

As you can see, people were not able to buy many new clothes.

Instead they had to:

Make Do and Mend

Clue: Look for object number 6 in the cabinet



What item of footwear can you see in the cabinet?

Object 5: Make do and mend slippers

Draw them here:

What are they made from?

The slippers are made from old scraps of fabric.

4. Toys



Look out for the handmade toy dog given to Maureen Watts by her father. It is in the case near the AV-8A Harrier Jet.

Who made the toy dog and what is it made from?

The dog was made by soldiers in return for extra leave. The army blanket and pieces of leather were all that was available to the soldier making it. Plus scarcity of materials and increasing taxes meant shop-bought toys were harder to find and more expensive than ever.

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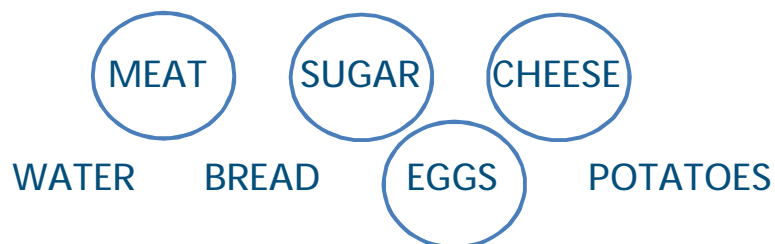


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