

## World War II

A selection of objects relating to 1939-1945 World War. You will notice that the ration books do not date from the wartime period itself. This is due to the fact that wartime ration books did not survive in such great numbers. They also serve as a reminder that rationing did not end with the end of the war.



## Links to QCA schemes of work

Unit 9 - What was it like for children in World War II?

### World War II

#### Gas Masks. Babies, Children and Adults.

By the end of September, 1938, **38 million** Gas Masks had been given out to British Families. They had to be carried **everywhere** to protect against the risk of **poisonous gas**



**attack.** The **baby's gas mask** fitted **over** the child rather than just the face. Children had to carry gas masks. They were generally transported in



cardboard boxes as gas masks looked quite **scary**, the government released some for children in **bright colours**. These were called **Mickey Mouse's**. Children also found they could blow rude noises in to gas masks.

**Instructions** for putting on gas masks and removing them were issued by the **Government**.



Cigarette Cards were a common place to spot instructions. Shops, Schools and Factories all held **Gas Mask** drills to prepare for a **Gas** attack. In August 1941, a **gas attack drill** was held in Barrow Town Centre using **real Gas** !! Respirators were never actually needed during World War II as gas was never used as a weapon.

**Ration Book** Rationing was introduced to Britain in January 1940 as **every house** had to register with a local shop, and **bacon, butter** and **sugar** was rationed. This was followed the same year by other goods: **meat, tea, fats, jam, cheese, eggs and milk. Clothing** and other goods followed suit, depending what was most in demand. In July 1942 in Barrow, **soap and white bread** were in short supply although bread was never rationed in Britain. Dried eggs and milk were distributed.



Coupons were handed over with money in exchange for goods. People were encouraged to start allotments and **grow their own food**. Many also exchanged goods. If one family didn't use sugar for example, they would swap with a family who did.

**Bombing Map** Map showing where **bombs** were dropped in Barrow. Barrow was a **target** in **World War II** due to its **ship and submarine building**, and 155 vessels were built in Barrow during World War II. Most bombs did **not** hit the shipyard however, and **civilian housing was destroyed**. 91 lives were lost and 531 people were injured. Most of the bombing occurred during the **months of 1941**, the so called **Barrow Blitz**. In May 1941, children from the central areas of Barrow most at risk were evacuated to Westmorland and Cumberland.



### **National Registration Identity Card**

Containing a personnel identity number. These had to be carried at **all times**. It was important this document was not lost as it had to be presented on demand. Fake identity documents were also used during World War II. Indeed, **passport photos were always carried** by British Air Crew. They were used to forge papers if the crewmen became stranded whilst on mission. In June 1940, the Chief Constable of Barrow reminded people to **carry their I.D. Cards at all times**. Several Italians were taken into custody in June 1940, but many had lived in Barrow all their lives.

## Civil Defence First Aid Post Helmet, bell and anti-gas eye shields

The Civil Defence were groups of men and women whose skills and occupations would be of **value** during the days that were to come in the war against the people and their homes. There were **Air Raid**



**Wardens, First Aid or Stretcher Parties, Rescue Parties, Demolition Parties, Decontamination Squads and Fire Guards.**

Originally these volunteers had **no uniform** apart from an armlet and steel helmet, but eventually were supplied with **overalls** and **heavy-duty greatcoats** for the **cold weather**. **Badges** would signify to which section the person belonged and both men and women could belong to the **Civil Defence**.



Air Raid Wardens also carried anti-gas eye shields as part of their equipment.



## Shrapnel

Shrapnel was invented by **Lieutenant Henry Shrapnel**, an English artillery officer in the 18th Century but it only became widely used in the 19th and 20th Century. It is now commonly used to describe **fragments** and **debris** thrown out by any **exploding object**.



## The Barrow Blitz

World War II lasted from 1939-1945. After advancing through Europe, Germany launched **air-raids** against Britain in order to disrupt industry, and damage morale. **Barrow** was first **bombed** in September 1940. The Barrow Blitz was the period between **April** and **May 1941** when the town came under **intensive bombing** attacks. The main targets for the bombers were the **shipyard, steelworks and docks**, but accurate bombing from fast moving aircraft has always been difficult, and most bombs **missed** their targets and fell on residential areas. The effect was devastating. When the **air raid sirens sounded**, people went into **special air raid shelters** or **hid in their cellars and under the stairs of their houses**. There were many **false alarms**, and raids often took place at short notice. Everyone had to **carry gas masks** to protect them in the event of an attack.

## The Home Front

For those at home, life was humdrum and hard. Food was **rationed** weekly as follows:

- 4oz bacon
- 6oz butter/margarine
- 8oz sugar
- 2oz tea
- 1oz cheese
- 2oz lard



Abbey Road

**Luxury** items, like **jams** or **eggs**, were allotted **monthly**.

At night, **all lights** had to be **concealed** so that German bombers could not **orientate** themselves. **Windows** were covered by **thick material**; street lights were **extinguished**. The blackout was enforced by Air Raid Patrol Wardens, who also led **rescue missions** in bombed areas.

## Timeline notes for Barrow and The Blitz

### Blitz

Blitz comes from the German word 'Blitzkrieg' which means 'Lightning War'. It was how the Germans had conquered Europe, now they set their sights on Britain.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940

The day after Churchill has just been made Prime Minister he visits Barrow shipyard to watch the aircraft carrier 'HMS Indomitable' being launched.

### August 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 1940

Almost 1,000 people are killed in London during German bomber raids.

### Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 1940

Battle of Britain begins. A popular catch phrase at the time was 'they'll never find Barrow', because people thought the iron ore would confuse German compasses. This was soon to be proved wrong.

### September 1<sup>st</sup> 1940

First compulsory blackout in Barrow.

### September 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> 1940

300 incendiaries are dropped on Salthouse. A 5yr old boy is the first victim. Cambridge St. School is hit but not burned down.

### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 1940

People in Barrow are horrified when they hear that Coventry is being bombed. 500 bombers drop 500 tons of explosives and 900 incendiaries in just 10 hours. Lots of Barrovians had moved there when times were bad. Rations are cut. Sugar-8 ounces per week / Tea-2 ounces. Southampton, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff, Hull and other cities suffer as the



Barrow Station



Union Street Blitz

### First few months of 1941

British diet is restricted. German submarines stopping food coming

into the country.

### Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> May 1941

German attacks on Barrow increase. Suffers worst bomb damage so far. Direct hit on a house in Hawcoat Lane. 70,000 people live in Barrow - Public shelters for only 3,500. Funding given to frontline towns. As a result of the Blitz - 83 people are killed, 330 injured, over 11,000 houses are damaged. The Shipyard suffers little damage. Germans drop land-mines, incendiaries, and high explosives. 6000 people leave the town at night and sleep rough in hedgerows to escape the bombing. The Council runs a bus to Birkkrigg for homeless people to shelter. 2250 children left Barrow privately.



The Trevelyan Hotel

### June 1941

Children are evacuated from Barrow central. As



Prospect Road

many as 4,000 leave. Many billeting families were poor themselves and couldn't afford to look after the evacuees but most made a good job of it by having less themselves. Concerns are raised over the state of children. Many with poor clothing, nits, scabies and some with diphtheria.

This was put down to the appalling conditions they had had to live in.

### 1942

Bruce, a Belgian Schnorza, is the first dog in Furness to be volunteered as a tracker and on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1942 the last bombs are dropped on Barrow. There are no casualties and only slight damage.

March 25<sup>th</sup> 1943 No air-raid siren was recorded after this date. The Blitz on Barrow is over.