

World War Two Loans Box



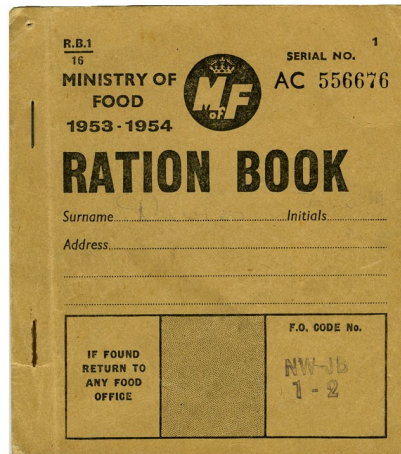
Gas mask [replica]

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 a **poisonous gas attack**.

Children had to carry gas masks. They were generally transported in cardboard boxes. As gas masks look quite **scary**, the government released some for children in bright colours. These were called Mickey Mouse gas masks. Children also found they could blow **rude** noises in to gas masks.

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! Gas masks were never actually needed during World War II as gas was never used as a **weapon**.

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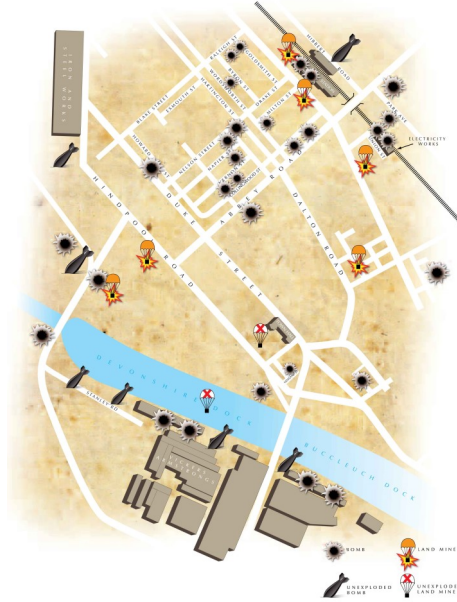


Ration book

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

People were encouraged to start **allotments** or grow food in their **gardens**. **Playing fields** at schools were also turned into **vegetable plots**. Many also **exchanged** goods. If one family didn't use sugar for example, they would swap with a family who did.

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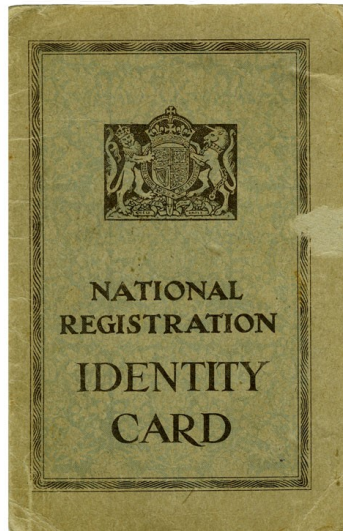
Bombing map

This map shows where bombs were dropped in Barrow (see A3 colour map in the loans box).

Barrow was a target in World War II due to its **ship and submarine building** and also because of the **steelworks**. 155 **vessels** were built in Barrow during World War II. However, most bombs did not hit their **intended targets**. Because **civilian housing** (where people lived) was close to the shipyard and steelworks they were often damaged or even destroyed instead.

91 lives were lost and 531 people were injured. Most of the bombing occurred during the months of 1941, in the so-called **Barrow Blitz**. In May 1941, children from the central areas of Barrow most **at risk** were **evacuated to West-morland and Cumberland** (in Cumbria).

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National Registration Identity Card

ID (Identity) cards had to be carried at all times. It was important this document was not lost as it had to be **presented on demand**. In June 1940 the Chief Constable of Barrow reminded people to carry their I.D. Cards at all times.

Why were ID cards introduced at the start of the war in 1939 in Britain?

It was an immediate **census*** and told the **government** how many people there were in Britain their **ages** and **gender**. It was really **important** in helping the government plan **rationing**, knowing how many could serve in the **armed forces** and how many could be **employed** in **industries vital** to the **war effort** (like the **shipyard** in Barrow).

*A census is finding out and recording information on everyone in an area.

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Civil Defence First Aid Post Helmet

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 **coats** for the cold weather.

It could be a **dangerous** and **dirty** job and often these men and women helped in Civil Defence **in addition** to working in a **factory**. They helped **save** many lives and were **essential** during bombing raids.

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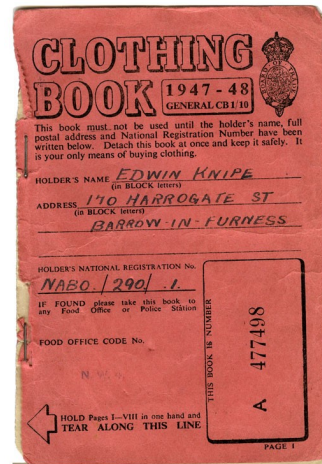


Shrapnel

When a bomb or grenade **explodes** its casing is **fragmented**. Not just the **explosion** but also the **fragments** from the bomb can cause a lot of **damage** to people and buildings.

Barrow was bombed intensively during May 1941 and bits of shrapnel like these were picked up people.

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Rationing

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

4oz bacon

8oz sugar

2oz tea

1oz cheese

6oz butter/margarine

2oz lard

Luxury items, like jams or eggs, were allotted monthly. Clothes were also rationed during the war and clothes rationing ended on 15 March 1949.

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Toilet paper

It's **amazing** how much life was **affected** during World War Two for **civilians**. The **government** had to **regulate** almost every aspect of life to make sure that the population didn't **starve** and so that **available resources** were used for making **equipment** such as bombs and tanks for the war effort.

Some everyday objects, like toilet paper and soap, were in short supply and more expensive than normal.

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Eye shields

These are anti-gas eye shields. Gas masks were issued for the entire population, from **babies** to **adults**, and you were **expected** to carry them at all times.

Eye shields were also supposed to **protect** against poisonous gas attacks. But the eye shields also proved **invaluable** as **protection** against wind and dust and soon found **widespread** use.

Fortunately gas wasn't used by the enemy against British civilians during World War Two.

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ARP bell

Air Raid Precautions wardens (A.R.P.) were expected to maintain the **blackout** (no lights showing in the streets, houses or factories), **report** bomb damage and took part in the **rescue** of **civilians**. They were given **badges** to sew onto the **dungarees** that the **ARP volunteers** were given.

They were issued with a **rattle** or **bell** so that they could **warn** people of an **impending** air raid. They also had **whistles**, "whistle blasts can be used by a warden to signal to anyone out of doors and appears to ignore the warning".

Their job could be **dangerous** and **dirty** and many carried out this task **in addition** to full time work.

Bells were used after the war in football matches to cheer on a team.

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German incendiary bomb

Bombs were **dangerous** and some children from areas in Barrow considered at risk were **evacuated** to the **countryside**:

"My brother was at Old Hutton [near Kendal in Cumbria], on a farm and was very happy there so they said I could go there I can remember picking raspberries and peas and things and going in the fields and school was a nice school."

But not everyone was so lucky:

"And a little boy came from Barrow Island to his auntie's over the road from us. They thought it was safer here in Worcester Street, and it wasn't; he got killed, an incendiary went right through the window."

People were **warned** of coming air raids by sirens and if there was time they would rush to a **shelter** either in their **garden** or in their **neighbourhood**.

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Timeline: The Barrow Blitz

Blitz

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

Saturday 11th 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 7th and 8th 1940

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

September 1st 1940

First compulsory blackout in Barrow (no lights allowed).

September 12th-13th 1940

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

The Barrow Blitz

This was the period between April and May 1941 when the town came under intensive bombing attacks. 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 with gas.