

FOOD WARS

the
battles
on the
home
front.



Left
A female supervisor in a National Kitchen samples one of the dishes.
© IWM

Right
Lieutenant Blacklock, DSC, demanding whereabouts of German submarine's Ensign which suddenly vanished as British party came alongside, Harwich. © IWM



FOOD WARS

the battles on the home front.

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Food Wars is a travelling exhibition exploring the relationship between conflict and food, and the impact on the British diet, from the National Kitchens and rationing of World War One due to the submarine threat, to the Dig for Victory campaigns and Pig Clubs of World War Two.

The Food Wars trailer toured during the summer of 2019 across Suffolk and Essex, and included original documents from East Anglia, and unique archive footage to view from the Imperial War Museum archives.

The information from the exhibition and other material is now included in this booklet, and available on the Harwich Haven Surrender & Sanctuary website.

Alongside the exhibition, Eastern Angles Theatre Company created two performance pieces to show during the summer of 2019 with the Food Wars trailer, and at community venues around the River Stour peninsula.

We would like to thank Bryce Evans for his research into the National Kitchens, the Imperial War Museum for use of photographs, and the National Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting our project.

the threat to food

“Underhand, unfair and damned un-English.”

Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, Controller of the Navy, describing submarines during World War One.



→ Above
German submarine crew in the communications room. From the official German War Records, held by The National Archives and Records Administration.

When war broke out on 4th August 1914, Britain was 60 percent reliant on imports.

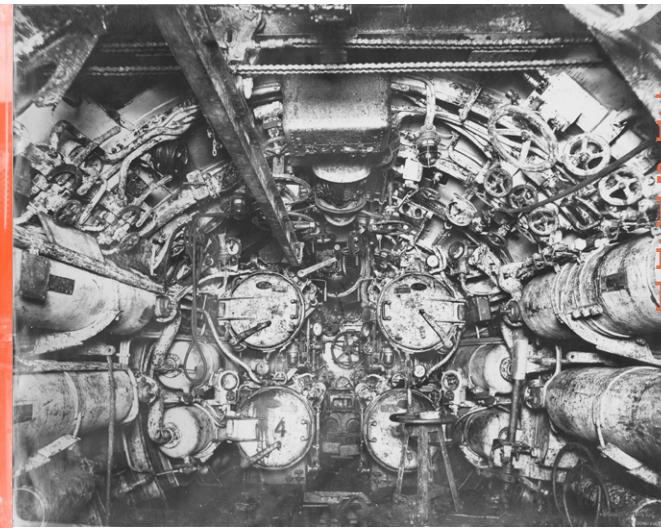
Meat, grains, fuel, fertilizers and other essential goods were transported by merchant ships regularly from Brazil, Australia and South Africa, turning to the West Indies when trade with Germany came to an end.

The Government called on farmers to increase food production without offering financial or labour support. Trade links came under threat by German submarines or U Boats, which were considered a new type of warfare not seen on this scale before. Over 1.4million tons of shipping was lost during the first few months of the war and continued at an alarming pace.



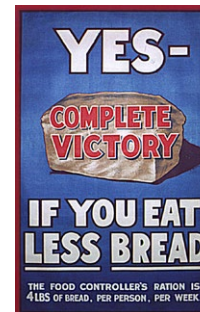
→ Right
Damage inflicted to an Allied torpedo boat destroyer "Elite" by the German U Boat SM U-35. © IWM

Left
German U Boat UC-1 used for mine laying, crew on deck, 1915. © IWM



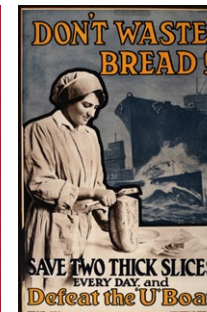
A unique look inside UB 110 submarine, after being scrapped in Wallsend, England.

→ Left
Each U 31 Class U Boat held 35 crew members in cramped conditions and was armed with 6 torpedoes. Because of the high risk role of submariners, they were prioritised the best naval rations to have during missions. © Tyne & Wear Archives



→ Above
Food propaganda posters from the Ministry of Food during the First World War. © IWM

Right
German film poster for "The U Boats Are Out!" promoting a U Boat commander as a "hero", 1917. © IWM



By late 1915, submarine warfare had a significant impact on food supplies, as the area around Britain was declared a war zone by Germany. Unrestricted submarine warfare was announced in 1916 leaving no Merchant ship safe, this combined with a poor harvest left Britain with just six weeks' of wheat. Even staples such

as potatoes, used as an alternative to flour, were in short supply.

Panic buying and riots had come with the outbreak of war, and food prices soared by around 130 percent over the following years. The threat of starvation was becoming real and urgent action was needed.

Staple foods in 1914 pre-war

 **Bread (wheat)**
78% imported

 **Meat (especially bacon)**
40% imported

 **Sugar**
100% imported

 **Cheese & Jam**

 **Milk & Butter**

 **Eggs**

1870s
Britain suffers from an agricultural depression and begins to rely on imports from abroad.

4th August 1914
Great Britain declares war against Germany. People panic buy at shops and food prices inflate.

18th August 1914
The Government calls on farmers to increase food production, but without offering additional support.

Autumn 1914
German U-Boat campaign begins December 1914 Zeppelins begin to appear over English Coast.

December 1914
Zeppelins begin to appear over English Coast.

February 1915
Zeppelins airships drop bombs on Great Yarmouth.

May 1915
New President of the Board of Agriculture appointed, Lord Selbourne, who took steps to increase food production.

7th May 1915
The American Ship the Lusitania is sunk by German U-Boats, after Germany warns America and Britain that ships are under threat.

the food rations begin

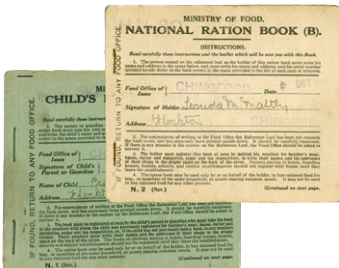
As the pressure of feeding the nation became vital, the Government took more drastic action. The Ministry of Food, created in 1916, was tasked to make Britain more self-sufficient and to ensure agricultural resources were better distributed.

From 1917, women were encouraged to join the Women's Land Army to combat the labour shortage on farms, and committees were set up to report on food production. The Corn Production Act also guaranteed a minimum

price for oats and wheat. A voluntary rationing code was introduced in February 1917 to encourage people to limit food, with an endorsement from the Royal Family. People were encouraged to take responsibility to ensure they didn't have more than they needed. Posters encouraged public to 'defeat the U Boat' and prevent the enemy from stealing from their tables. Although voluntary rationing was a good idea in principle, it was largely ineffective, and poorer communities became malnourished.



The ministry wanted National Kitchens to 'not resemble a soup kitchen for the poorest sections of society', but rather, a place for 'ordinary people in ordinary circumstances'.



September 1915
First Women's Institute (WI) set up in Britain. Women encouraged to contribute to the war effort. The Board of Agriculture develops a scheme to train women in agricultural work in colleges.

April 1916
Britain has just 6 weeks' worth of wheat left.

31st May 1916
Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle of World War One.

Autumn 1916
Poor harvests abroad mean extra strain on food supply to Britain.

July - November 1916
Battle of the Somme on the Western Front.

September 1916
German submarine warfare increases along with the rate of inflation. The Royal Commission on the Wheat Supply is formed, and the War Office moves to guarantee a price on Irish oats to protect the supply to horses.



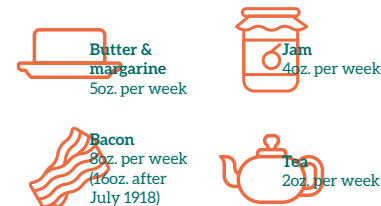
May Byron, describes puddings as "indispensable" in her How to Save Cookery book, in 1915.

→ **Top left**
A female worker at a National Kitchen ticket office serving a member of the public. © IWM

Bottom right
The illustrated London News, Feb 23, 1918.

Bottom left
Bury St Edmunds Ration card wallet, sugar registration card and ticket, 1918. © The Suffolk Record Office

Compulsory rationing was gradually established from December 1917, with wheat and sugar controlled first. More food items were included, and by April 1918 it had been extended to:



Rules were strict and people were expected to register with their local butcher and greengrocer. Anyone caught wasting food or abusing the system could be fined or even imprisoned. To subsidise food, the campaign for growing your own was encouraged. Although availability of items was limited and prices high, queues at shops began to reduce and the food threat was beginning to subside.



December 1916
Coalition Government comes into power, with David Lloyd George as Prime Minister. The Ministry of Food created.

1917
Women's Land Army (WLA) formed, and made a significant impact on food production in Britain.

Early 1917
German U-Boat campaign is ramped up, and unrestricted warfare announced with all allied and neutral ships now a target. Merchant ships bringing food to Britain take heavy blows.

February 1917
Voluntary rationing introduced, but did not have a great impact.

May 1917
The first National Kitchen was opened by Queen Mary in Westminster Bridge Road, London.

food for all



→ Top left
Female cooks in the scullery of a National Kitchen. © IWM

Top right
Messenger boy from a local factory collecting cooked food from a National Kitchen. © IWM



A National Kitchen typical menu consisted of:

Soup	Suet pudding
-	Milk puddings
Roast Meat	Scones
Meat pies	Cakes
Fish	Yorkshire Puddings
	Angel delight



Before compulsory rationing, charity organisations had been providing small scale communal kitchens. These were mainly for the poorest people in towns where voluntary rationing was not working.

The Ministry of Food considered these kitchens useful, but disliked the public image of soup kitchens and the Socialist connotations of 'communal'. The volunteer kitchens were remodelled as state-backed businesses and the National Kitchen was established. The first was opened by Queen Mary in Westminster Bridge Road, London, May 1917.

Spring 1917
Women's Land Army formed encouraging women to fill the gaps left by men working in agriculture.

November 1917
Battle of Cambrai on the Western Front, where new British Tanks made a difference on the battlefield.

December 1917
Compulsory Rationing introduced in London first, then extended nationwide. Sugar is one of the first items to be limited. Ration cards are distributed, and people asked to register with their local butcher and greengrocer.

April 1918
Meat, butter, cheese and margarine rationed.

11th November 1918
Armistice signed bring the end of the war. Women's Land Army is disbanded.

→ Top left
Female cooks in the scullery of a National Kitchen. © IWM

Top right
Female cooks serving the public at a National Kitchen. © IWM

Bottom right
Female cooks conduct the final preparations for the day's meal before the public enter at a National Kitchen. © IWM



"... you would never dream it was a National Kitchen. The place has the appearance of being a prosperous confectionary and café business..."

The Scarborough Post report on a central National Kitchen in Hull.

The meals were moderately priced, but never free, to differentiate the Kitchens from voluntary food relief. Low prices were ensured by the Government, whose contact with 'shippers and important dealers in the great markets' meant that food was procured at 25% or less of retail price - savings which were passed on to customers. When compulsory rationing began, people could swap rations for meals. The Kitchens were staffed and organised mainly by women and operated like cheap restaurants where people could book a table. They provided hearty, plain, British meals, whilst trying to be nutritious, offering plenty of vegetables.

By November 1918, there were 363 registered National Kitchens in Britain, and their impact was positive offering a valuable service. By June 1919 however there were 120 fewer, and within a year the National Kitchens Division of the Ministry of Food was disbanded due to pressures from restaurant businesses, and lack of support to sustain them.

The National Kitchens inspired the 'British Restaurants' of the Second World War which continued into the 1950s.

The First World War acted as a model for food policies, and lessons learnt from compulsory rationing were applied during World War Two to prevent the possibility of starvation again.

November 1918
363 National Kitchens are registered across Britain, but within a year the National Kitchens Division of the Ministry of Food was disbanded.

Winter 1918 - 19
Fresh milk in short supply over winter, and prioritised for children.

By 1918
Over 2.5 million acres of land had been turned over to arable farming production.

1921
The Corn Production Act is repealed to minimise cost to the Exchequer, as the war ends and world agricultural prices fall rapidly.

The abandonment of the four years' notice to protect farmers, was referred to as 'the greatest betrayal'.

the ministry of food

When the Second World War began in September 1939, the British Government was determined not to repeat the food pressures of 1914.

To this end the Ministry of Food was given considerable new powers to ensure that the nation's food supply was protected, and the first rations came only four months into the war. The Ministry, famously led by the kindly Lord Woolton (Uncle Fred), introduced Ration Books and produced mountains of leaflets, posters and media campaigns to encourage the British public to 'Make Do and Mend' and 'Dig For Victory'. Their focus was on doing your bit at home rather than defeating the U Boats.



→ Above
The Minister for Food between April 1940 and 11 November 1943, Lord Woolton, receiving a cup of tea from a mobile canteen. © IWM



→ Above
Woman feeding chicken during World War Two.
-
Left
Posters for the 'Dig For Victory' campaign during World War Two. © IWM



→ Above
A display of fruit and vegetables in a greengrocer's shop somewhere in Britain includes a sign stating that the oranges on sale are intended to be only for children. © IWM

→ Top left
Country War Agricultural Committee Labour Officer checks back two men in to camp at Nunney Catch as they return from a day in the fields. © IWM

Top right
A fruit and vegetable wholesaler displays a list of his goods on a blackboard at Covent Garden Market, London during 1940. © IWM



War Agricultural Committees and Ministry of Food Inspectors were dispatched across the country to ensure that the often-strict rules were adhered to, but there was a flourishing Black Market, where illicit extra food or much-missed luxuries could be obtained. By March 1941, 2,300 people had been prosecuted and severely penalised for fraud and dishonesty.

Community feeding centres began to surface, and after a name change to British Restaurants, they offered services and meals to those who had lost their kitchens through bombing. Harking back to the National Kitchens of 1918, people could save their coupons and instead pay for a cheap meal – one in Ipswich opened in January 1941.

30th September 1938
Chamberlain returns from peace talks with Germany – "Peace in our Time".

March 1939
Hitler invades Czechoslovakia.

1st September 1939
Hitler invades Poland.

3rd September 1939
Britain & France declare war on Germany.
The Battle of the Atlantic begins.

October 1939
Dig For Victory campaign begins.

December 1939
University of Cambridge conducts rationing trials.

January 1940
Ration Books and Identity Cards issued to General Public.

8th January 1940
Bacon, butter and sugar rationed.

11th March 1940
All meat rationed.

April 1940
Lord Woolton becomes Minister of Food.

dig for victory

The specific 'Dig for Victory' campaign was set up during the World War Two and lasted the entire war. Men and women across the country were encouraged to grow their own food in times of harsh rationing. Open spaces everywhere were transformed into allotments, from tiny gardens to public parks – even the gardens of Buckingham Palace lawns were turned into vegetable patches.

Leaflets, radio and cinema campaigns formed part of a huge propaganda campaign aiming both to ensure that people had enough to eat, and that morale was kept high.



→ Top
Land Girl from Middlesbrough helps with the harvest on a farm in Yorkshire. She was a shop assistant before joining the Women's Land Army. © IWM



Bottom
Women developing recipes which make the absolute best use of produce available in wartime in the Ministry of Food research kitchen in London to ensure that the civilian population have the best possible wartime diet. © IWM

10th May 1940
Hitler invades Holland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

13th May 1940
Chamberlain resigns. Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister.

26th May 1940
Dunkirk (Operation Dynamo) 338,000 men rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk.

10th July – 31st October 1940
The Battle of Britain – The RAF defend the skies of Britain from German air attack.



→ Left
Land Girls 2, BBC Hulton Picture Library.

Below
Curator of the Gardens, examines potato crops grown experimentally, at the behest of the Ministry of Food, using a chip from a seed potato, rather than the whole thing. © IWM



→ Above
Allotment holders on Hampstead Heath. © IWM

Right
Allotments in Kensington Gardens, London, all part of the 'Dig for Victory' scene in 1942. © IWM



"When Britain entered the war in 1939 the island relied on the annual import of 22 million tons of food. By 1942 this had fallen by half. British farmers responded by switching from producing meat to growing wheat and potatoes. Most agricultural land was under grass, used to feed livestock. But once the war started it made no sense to waste energy by raising animals."

Organisations, such as the Women's Land Army returned with great vigour from the First World War and were sent to farms and fields across the country to help with planting, growing and harvesting of home-grown food, as well as covering other occupations needing labour.

July 1940
Tea and Margarine rationed.

May 1941
Cheese rationed.

June 1941
Eggs rationed.

22nd June 1941
Hitler attacks Russia.

7th Sept 1940
The Blitz begins.

battle of the Atlantic

Winston Churchill famously said, “... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril”. This was no understatement. At the beginning of the Second World War, despite lessons from 1914, Britain still relied heavily on imports from other countries for its food and resources, and the threat attacking German submarines on merchant ships was still at the forefront of concern.

To avoid this possibility, merchant ships from America – providing canned meat and fish, tinned fruit, dried peas, breakfast cereal, suet and jellies – were moved across the Atlantic in convoys, and protected by mine sweepers, air support and battleships.



→ Left
A Liverpool dockyard worker enjoys a meal of American baked ham during a working day in 1941. © IWM

Above
Dock workers take a break from unloading American Lend-Lease cheese from a ship to enjoy a lunch of American cheese sandwiches. © IWM

7th December 1941
Pearl Harbour.

August 1942
Nearly all food rationed, except vegetables and bread.

November 1942
Battle of Stalingrad.

April 1943
Sausages rationed.

8th December 1941
Britain & US declare war on Japan.



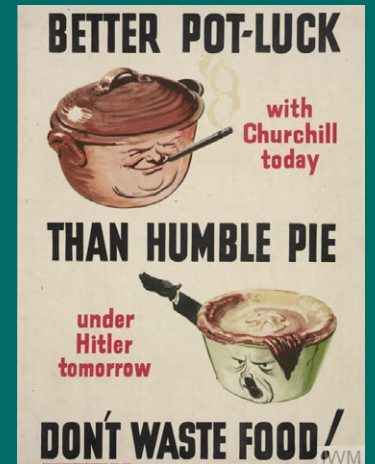
By mid-1943 radar, the breaking of the German naval code and the US shipbuilding programme had beaten back the U-boat threat.

Many ships made it safely across the Atlantic in this way although 3500 were sunk, along with 175 warships. The Germans lost nearly 800 submarines to Allied attack. Even with some merchant ships still reaching Britain, certain items such as eggs,

onions, fresh fruit and nuts all but disappeared from shops in cities and towns. Without the large campaign for food growing at home, and compulsory rationing being enforced quickly in 1940, Britain would have severely struggled to feed its people.

→ Left
Balloons being transferred from the balloon launch to merchant ships. © IWM

Below
In a large warehouse, somewhere in Britain, American bacon and hams are treated to remove salt before they are sent out to retail shops. © IWM



→ Above
Poster reflecting the British Government's efforts to manage the national economy. © IWM

3rd September 1943
Italy surrenders.

6th June 1944
D-Day – The Allies launch an attack on German forces in Normandy.

25th August 1944
Paris liberated from German occupation.

8th May 1945
Germany surrenders. Victory in Europe Day.

the rations

**“Those who have the will to win,
Eat potatoes in their skin
Knowing that the sight of peelings
Deeply hurts Lord Wooltons feelings”**

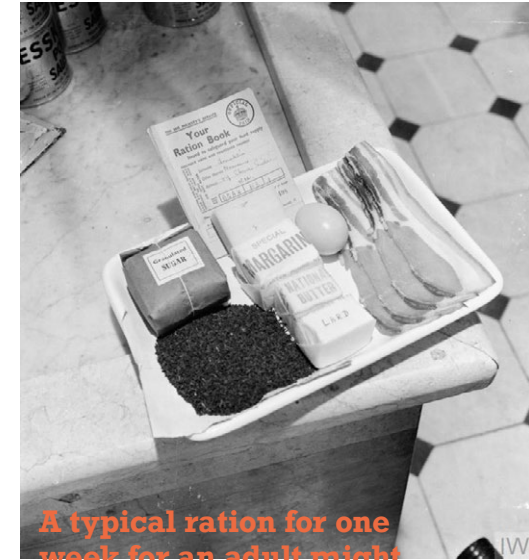
To deal with sometimes extreme shortages, the Ministry of Food instituted a radical system of rationing. To buy most rationed items each person had to register at 2 or 3 selected shops and was provided with a ration book containing coupons.

Learning from the First World War, rationing began quickly after war broke out; petrol, swiftly followed by meat, butter and sugar were all rationed within four months. Clothes rationing was also added in June 1941, with 60 coupons to last a year (later reduced to 48). By the end of the War, most foods were covered by the rationing, except for fruit and vegetables, but bread eventually was rationed in July 1946.



→ Left
A shopkeeper stamps Mrs Day's ration book during her shopping trip on the Kings Road in Chelsea.
© IWM

Below
Tray containing a ration book and the weekly ration of sugar, tea, margarine, 'national butter', lard, eggs, bacon and cheese as issued to an adult in Britain during 1942. © IWM



A typical ration for one week for an adult might look something like this:

4 oz of Bacon or Ham
4 oz of fish
Meat to the value of 1 shilling and 2d (pence)
2 oz of Cheese
4 oz of Margarine
4 oz of Cooking Fat
3 pints of milk, sometimes dropping to 2 pints

8 oz of Sugar
2 oz of Tea
1 Fresh Egg (from 1942 dried egg from America)
3 oz of Sweets
8 oz of Preserves or jam a month

Rationing continued to 1954 and although the fear of low food stocks was real, the people of Britain never came close to starvation due to the quick actions of the Government and the measures taken by civilians. The same was not true in Europe. After the war, when people were arguably at their healthiest, food became cheap and plentiful as agriculture boomed in America and gained popularity in Britain. Wartime advances in food processing and packaging led to the appearance of the bags of frozen vegetables, canned fruit juices, jars of instant coffee and ready meals, revolutionising the way we eat today as well as the health of the nation.



→ Above
Customer making a purchase in a grocery shop during the Second World War. © IWM

Left
Woman in front of a grocer's store during rationing, 1939.

Right
Child's ration book (issued July 1943) and a series of food-related certificates and coupons specifically for children. © IWM

5th July 1945
Churchill loses election to Labour Party.

6th August 1945
Atomic Bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

14th August 1945
Japanese surrender.

23rd September 1945
Victory over Japan (VJ Day).

25th July 1948
Flour comes off ration.

19th May 1950
Canned Fruit and mincemeat come off the ration.

October 1952
Tea comes off the ration.

February 1953
Sweets and Sugar come off the ration.

4th July 1954
All rationing ends.

Partnership with Eastern Angles Theatre Company

To accompany the touring Food Wars trailer during 2019, Eastern Angles Theatre Company created two multi-dimensional performance pieces covering rationing, food supplies, and the response of agriculture and government to the threat of national food shortages during two world wars.

Oh, What a Lovely Food War features a music hall treatment of the U-Boat war, the first introduction of food rationing, and the National Food Kitchens that fed rich, poor and everyone in between. Singers, comedians and a ventriloquist tell the story behind the strategies of Asquith and Lloyd George, including the man who really did know his father, and the first Great War British bake-off of bread made with potato flour!

Saving Our Bacon takes up the story in World War II, when pigs in blankets were something different, and the black market was just around the corner. The memories of those still living have been stirred into action once more to resurrect the stories of the home front that get forgotten.

As well as touring with the Food Wars exhibition, the performances travelled across the East Anglian region to community venues, schools and care homes, engaging a range of generations in local heritage.

To find out more, visit:
www.easternangles.co.uk



Harwich Haven: Surrender and Sanctuary is a public history project beginning in 2018, which encourages local people and visitors to explore the unique role of Harwich, Dovercourt, Felixstowe and the Shotley Peninsula in two momentous events in world history during the twentieth century: the surrender of the German U-Boat fleet here in November 1918, and the arrival of the first Jewish refugees on the so-called 'Kindertransport' in December 1938.

These are two moments in time which bookend the conclusion of one global conflict (the First World War) and the beginning of another (the fight against fascism in the Second World War between 1939 and 1945).

We want you to join us and our partner organisations in exploring this history that is unique to the Harwich Haven. We want to build on the past, learn from it, and leave behind an educational and visitor legacy which can benefit this historic corner of Essex and Suffolk in the years to come.

We hope you will visit our website below to find out more about this incredible history, and the events held as part of the project, including a new Maritime Heritage Walk, a visit from the Kindertransport Association of America, and new resources for local schools.

We are particularly grateful to those people who play the National Lottery and who, by doing so, have funded our work.

www.harwichhavenhistory.co.uk

FOOD WARS



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