

Woking History Society

e-journal



President Richard hoeing for victory May 1940

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Thoughts of Chairman Gristwood

Welcome to the first edition of the Woking History Society e-journal. It is a cross between the e-bulletin and the Newsletter and will, for the time being, replace both.

As you will all be aware, we have cancelled all meetings and outings until further notice because of Covid-19. We will try to produce this e-journal as often as we can to keep you up to date with what is happening within the Society and to keep us all involved with history! The move to an e-journal was prompted by several things, with the ease and cost of distribution being the main factor. Most of our members are on email and this seems a more sensible way of doing things. For those (very few) members not on email, the e-journal will be printed and posted as long as the postal service is running.

We were all looking forward to Nick Barratt's talk in May on 'Family history and the media – behind the scenes of *Who do you think you are*'. The good news is that Nick has been rebooked for May 10th 2021. David Rose, who was due to talk to us about Woking Nurseries in April, has agreed to do his talk at a later date. The talk about the Shah Jahan Mosque and the visit can also be postponed. The visit to the Hockey Museum and Charles Brooking's Museum will be

rearranged for next year. None of us know what will happen in the autumn but we hope that we can be up and running again sometime before Christmas.

We have been notified that all 'Celebrate Woking' events have been cancelled until Remembrance Sunday on November 8th. This means no Party in the Park or Heritage Weekend. All libraries, the Lightbox and the Surrey History Centre are closed until further notice.

This first issue is by way of an experiment and most of the articles are written by past and present committee members. The articles on rationing in the 1st and 2nd World Wars were prompted by the recent episodes of panic buying in supermarkets and the subsequent wastage of some of this food!

With no more talks to write up, we will want articles for the e-journal. I'm sure that many of you have research to contribute, so please don't be shy! With VE day and VJ day coming up, it would be nice to have some memories/oral histories of life in Woking during the war. Please send them to the WHS email address historywoking@gmail.com or to anntilbury@hotmail.com

Helen Gristwood

DON'T PANIC!

This is not a Presidential pronouncement, but a response to a request from our chairman to write about rationing in war-time and post-war Woking, given the recent scenes of empty shelves.

As background, my father worked for Cornhill Insurance (now a part of Allianz) and a year before the war the company had evacuated most of its functions to Shalford House – a Georgian house now demolished up a lane by Shalford Church. It seemed sensible for the family then living in Ilford to follow the firm to be safer and convenient for work, so a week before war was declared we moved into in a new-build house in Bramley. I was approaching my fourth birthday and remember a somewhat dark and crowded house as my grandparents had self-evacuated (it is said they left even before Chamberlain had finished speaking) from Ilford to join them, and others joined us during the war including children whom my mother had looked after as a nanny, and the mother of Frank Doel, the bookseller of the book and film '84 Charing Cross Road'.

I did not then understand the practicalities of rationing, but remember my grandfather making daily bus trips to Guildford for food for my delicate grandmother (who

died in 1956), including tripe, which looked rather like knitting. We all had our ration books (Google 'ration book WW2' and see the multitude of books on offer) and had to be registered at a specific shop. In Bramley there were actually three grocers, a pork butcher and baker who also sold groceries and three 'corner shops', as well as a dairy and a butcher's. With a population of about 2000 custom must have been spread quite thinly. We were registered for groceries at Robertson's, a shop which grew from little more than a lean-to to occupy three adjoining sites, the last one (latterly the grocery part) is still an electrician's founded by the Robertsons' son, Len. From 8th January 1940, basic foods were rationed by type, a typical supply being:

Bacon & Ham	4 oz
Other meat	value of 1 shilling and 2 pence (6p – equivalent to 2 chops)
Butter	2 oz
Cheese	2 oz
Margarine	4 oz
Cooking fat	4 oz
Milk	3 pints
Sugar	8 oz
Preserves	1 lb every 2 months
Tea	2 oz
Eggs	1 fresh egg (plus allowance of dried egg)
Sweets	12 oz every 4 weeks

These rose or fell according to the state of supplies, and beyond that there were items such as tinned meat (Spam), fish, fruit and vegetables which had a 'points' value allocated to them and could be bought as required and available. Barracouta, canned fish, was imported by the government from Australia and carried no points value, although it was not universally popular, as was snoek, another cheap fish import from South Africa. There were items which were not rationed, e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables and offal - the Bramley butcher allocated his supplies of non-rationed meat by order of surname with a board in the window stating which alphabetic range could buy that week. Fuel was also rationed, although private motoring was practically banned and bread was not rationed until 1946. Sweets, as shown, were allowed in moderate amounts, thus preserving the nation's teeth in a pre-NHS world: an attempt to de-ration them in 1949 lasted only four months as the nation flocked to buy and after a few days we could find only crystallised ginger. Sweets were safely taken off ration in 1953 and in 1954 meat, the last item left, ceased to be rationed. I remember coping with my patrol's emergency ration cards on a Scout trip to the Lake District in 1953. Special groups of people could have enhanced rations, e.g. heavy industry workers, members of the Women's

Land Army, pregnant mothers and members of the armed forces - it was from the extra rations for these groups that black market and extra illegal supplies came, and the further you were from a large centre the more these irregularities occurred unnoticed. Visits to relations in Cornwall immediately post-war found a practically ration-free zone. Then you could trade some items for others, as I was allergic to eggs my egg ration was transferred to buying feed for our not very productive chickens at the end of the garden. Their fairly infrequent eggs provided a few extras and the chickens themselves, along with our equally unproductive rabbits, could be killed by the pork butcher and eaten. He would also take our surplus sage for use in his sausages. In 1942 my father was called to join the RAF, and my mother somehow managed a seven-year old, plus a lodger, and tended the garden, whose lawn had been turned to potatoes. At the end of our cul-de-sac was a 'pig bin' for any surplus food to feed pigs, hopefully without causing any public health problems.

Beyond my little world of Bramley with trips to Guildford and Cranleigh (but never Woking), in Woking the food office was in the old council offices along Commercial Road, and that is where ration books were exchanged each year. The Canadians

at Inkerman Barracks received a lot of food and at Christmas they lived off turkey and chicken giblets for a long time. The 'Surrey Mirror' was excellent at suggesting recipes, including nettle haggis - don't try this at home! - sausage dumplings, and sausage and rice salad, the sausages being represented by the tinned American 'Dawn' pork meat. Housewives were urged to salvage every household bone which could fetch £3.10.0 a ton and be made into glue, feeding stuffs and fertilisers, a good use for the 25,000 tons of bones thrown away pre-war. In Woking Joan Boschier remembers long queues for any fruit (although in the words of the song 'Yes, we have no bananas' remained true until the end of the war), and she grew vegetables, kept chickens and rabbits and fed them on scrap potato peelings. The threatening yet patriotic notice at the entrance to the Guinness estate around Pyrford still stands at the end of East Hill.

I recall though that rationing habits took a long time to end, and for my first year at Oxford there would be some tea, butter, sugar and jam awaiting in my room for use out of hall, at the beginning of term - the jam was not very special and was withdrawn because few people were using it, and by my second year these 'rations' had ceased.

I must have a word about what seems to be the most hoarded item at present - toilet paper. Using those words (but not any other terms either coarser or more refined), the British Newspaper Archive for the entire war years (apart from advertisements) has nationally only five reports of thefts, all small and from factories or offices, but a significant report from a shop manager in Coventry in 1940 stated that he knew of people who had four years' supplies of toilet paper, doilies and serviettes - standards have to be kept up!

Frugal but balanced diets were the norm until the mid-1950s - perhaps a warning against over-indulgence.

Richard Christophers

(see <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Rationing-in-World-War-Two/>)



Notice at the end of East Hill

Rationing in WW1

Following on from the President's article on rationing in the 2nd World War, I would like to add a bit about rationing in the 1st World War. Having embarked on some 'clearing out' during spare time at home, I came across not only 2nd World War ration books belonging to my grandparents, but also books from the 1st World War belonging to my mother, who was actually born after the war ended in 1918, and my grandfather.

Rationing was introduced in 1918 as tons of food had been lost when ships were sunk by German submarines. This led to shortages for both soldiers and civilians. First to be introduced was sugar rationing (8 oz per week) that came into effect on January 1st 1918, this was followed by the rationing of meat (by price), butter/ lard/ margarine (5 oz per week), jam (4oz) and tea (2oz). An attempt to introduce tinned fish, horse meat and eels was not universally embraced!

Both ration books for both adult and child contain coupons for meat, lard, butter and sugar. There are extra spaces for other items to be added with the words '*Do nothing with these spaces until told Public notice how to use them*'. Some have been used, probably for jam and tea.

The propaganda inside the ration

books is interesting. My mother's contains the following:

The Food Controller's message
Every ship that can be released from carrying food from overseas is urgently needed for the transport of men and munitions to France. On every British ship that sails, our seamen risk their lives. Even when peace comes, our need for ships can hardly be less. The Food Controller asks you to remember these things and to do all in your power to SAVE FOOD and to GROW FOOD.

The adult book has this message from the Shipping Controller:

The War will end when the Allied Forces are sufficient to defeat the enemy decisively. When that will be depends on how large a force of American Soldiers can be sent quickly to France to join the Allied Forces already there. America has enough men and wishes to send them, but the number she sends must depend on the supplies - food, guns and equipment, which can be sent to France to maintain them, and, therefore, on the ships available to transport these supplies. You can save ships by saving food, and, therefore, help to increase the Allied Armies and the win the War quickly. If everyone in Great Britain ate only 2 oz a day less than last year, the saving alone would enable 200,000 additional soldiers to be sent to France and maintained

there. Every ship saved means 5,000 more soldiers in France. SAVE FOOD AND END THE WAR QUICKLY.

instinctively opposed to all but the most imperative restrictions upon our daily movements and acts' and 'as a

NAMES OF RETAILERS.	
Name and Address of Sugar Retailer. 1	Name and Address of Pastry Retailer. 2
J. BROWNJOHN HORSSELL.	J. HORSSELL 10 Horsell.
Name and Address of Butcher. 3	Name and Address of Bacon Retailer. 4
J. Hart Horsell	J. BROWNJOHN. HORSSELL.
Name and Address of Grocer. 5	Name and Address of Fish Retailer. 6
J. BROWNJOHN HORSSELL.	J. BROWNJOHN. HORSSELL.
Name and Address of Baker. 7	Name and Address of Confectioner. 8

Ration book from Brownjohns's in Horsell

MINISTRY OF FOOD.
CHILD'S RATION BOOK (A).

INSTRUCTIONS.

Read carefully these instructions and the leaflet which will be sent you with this Book.

1. The parent or guardian of the child named on the reference leaf at the holder of this ration book must sign his own name and write the child's name and address in the space below, and write the child's name and address, and the serial number (printed upside down on the back cover) in the space provided to the left of each page of coupons.

2. For convenience of writing at the Food Office the Reference Leaf has been put opposite the back cover, and has purposely been printed upside down. It should be carefully examined. If there is any mistake in the notice on the Reference Leaf, the Food Office should be asked to correct it.

3. The book must be registered at once by the child's parent or guardian who must take the book to the retailers with whom the child was previously registered for butcher's meat, bacon, butter and margarine, sugar and tea respectively, or, if the child has not previously had a book to any retailers chosen. These retailers must write their names and the addresses of their shops in the proper space on the back of the cover. The books of children staying in hotels, boarding houses, schools, and similar establishments should not be registered until they leave the establishment.

4. The ration book may be used only by or on behalf of the holder, to buy rationed food for him, or members of the same household, or guests sharing common meals. It may not be used to buy rationed food for any other persons.

(Continued on next page.)

N. 1 (Nov.)

IF FOUND, RETURN TO ANY FOOD OFFICE.

Food Office of: WHITLEY BAY. Date: 18 JAN 1919

Issue: 3

Signature of Child's Parent or Guardian: S. Kirkland

Name of Child: Joyce Kirkland

Address: 24 Warburton Avenue

Child's ration book

Rationing ended in May 1919. This article in the Times seems quite apt at the moment - particularly the phrases 'the spirit of the nation is

nation, we are not naturally docile under restraint'!
Heben Gristwood

THE END OF THE FOOD COUPON

FROM THE TIMES MAY 2, 1919

After tomorrow food coupons will vanish, we trust never to reappear. There are people who would like us to be couponed and controlled forever, but the spirit of the nation is instinctively opposed to all but the most imperative restrictions upon our daily movements and acts. Though the coupons vanish, the ration books will remain in use for some time longer for purchases of sugar, meat, and butter.

The public will not be sorry when registration also disappears. Without it the nation could never have been successfully rationed; but, while it

has suited the shopkeepers and the Food Ministry, it has never been popular with purchasers. Far too many retailers adopted an attitude of condescending arrogance which was exasperating and foolish.

It is expected that rationing will entirely cease in July, and the Food Ministry and local food committees be wound up. The one body which appears to regard its approaching eclipse with dismay is the Consumers' Council. The Council did excellent work, but it was inclined to exceed its province. When it asks to be perpetuated, it speaks for no one but itself.

Both the Food Ministry and the nation have every reason to be proud of the success of rationing. From the moment the coupon method was instituted, accompanied by a scientific method of food distribution, discontent vanished and complaints were rare. We believe no country in the world which has

resorted to compulsory rationing has equalled the smoothness with which the change was made in liberty-loving England. As a race we are not naturally docile under restraint and fears were expressed that the ration book system might break down. Though experience pointed the way to improvements, on the whole the experiment of placing the country on rations was one of our greatest triumphs in the war. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the late Lord Rhondda and to Mr Clynnes, as well as to the many able men and women associated with them. If the Food Ministry was able to handle its gigantic task so well, it was largely owing to the genius of Mr Hoover and to the sacrifices of the people of the United States and Canada, not in the interests of this country alone, but of many European nations.

THETIMES.CO.UK/ARCHIVE

Public Transport In Woking Before The Motor Bus

As our Chairman has discovered, the 1911 census does not appear to record anyone involved in public transport other than trains. Indeed 1911 is the year when the first applications for motor bus licences were made by Frank Mills of St John's, and thus provides the opening date for Laurie James's 'Woking buses, 1911-1939'. Laurie mentions some earlier and spasmodic efforts at horse and motor buses and, importantly, a grand plan in 1903 for a tramway from Woking to Knaphill, which Anthony Saunders described in the Society's 'Newsletter', no 268 (Summer 2018). The enterprising Mr Quartermaine, garage and cinema owner and local councillor, registered his Woking and District Motor Bus Company on 26 April 1906, but the company was rapidly dissolved on 6th July of the same year. What all the failed pioneers had in their sights was the lucrative traffic between Knaphill and Woking, with soldiers and workers at Brookwood Hospital who would have been attracted to the fast growing amenities of the new town centre and the station to take them further afield.

The directories before 1908 are presently unavailable as the only copies seem to be in the British Library, but there are a few earlier

signs of activity; Althorp's Almanac for 1888, the 1899 Surrey and 1908 Woking directories, helped by census returns. The terminology of the early days is not always clear, but the term 'carman' seems to exclusive refer to carriers of goods, and 'fly proprietor' is equivalent to a taxi service. 'Carrier' means mostly goods, but perhaps making some places available to people, but I have not dealt with these. In Brookwood, conveniently near the station, William Pile Hill is a coal merchant in 1881, to which he has added cab proprietor by 1888 and grocer by 1891. By 1901 he flaunts the address 'Refreshment Rooms' right next to the Brookwood Hotel and station and his son is with the firm, being a 'motor proprietor' by the time of the 1939 Register. When he dies in 1906 he is running a temperance hotel in Brookwood. An omnibus proprietor who had a short career in the trade was Harry Hillier, in St John's between 1886 and 1888, moving to Clews Lane Bisley and Mincing Lane Chobham. Henry Scrivens was a cab proprietor in Knaphill between 1887 and 1889 and may have died in 1893. The year 1899 sees some enterprising cab work, but only one man, A Jackson, of St John's, daring to call himself a bus and fly proprietor. The Albion had well-appointed carriages of every description, as does Edmund Waters in Church Street, whose carriages meet up and down trains, while in

Maybury George Wickenden of 8, Lavender Road is another fly proprietor. It is people like these whose cabs are shown outside Woking station in a photograph from

redoubtable teenage daughter and driver, Millie, started a trend which was hastened by the need for transport during the war, population growth and the availability of cheap



The Albion decorated for the coronation of King Edward VII, 1902, with waiting cab

about that time (in Iain Wakeford's 'Woking Town Centre', p. 42), but it is unclear whether the well-dressed gentlemen wearing the top hats are cabbies or commuters.

Thus it appears that before 1911 public buses were almost non-existent in Woking. To a generation used to walking there were stations at Woking, Brookwood, and Byfleet (now West Byfleet) which provided links for anyone wishing to leave their immediate localities. Commuters were generally affluent and if they did not rise to their own horse and carriage a 'fly' would get them home. But in 1911 Frank Mills, with his

chassis which could be adapted to buses by enterprising ex-servicemen, Laurie James's book sounds rather specialist but outlines 28 years of growth and rivalry, which continued until the outbreak of World War 2, and was set into decline from 1949 by the growing availability of private cars. In London the motor bus still reigns supreme, but traffic congestion, rising fares and car ownership in Surrey set the country bus into decline, which free travel for pensioners helped to arrest for a while, before services were reduced.

Richard Christophers

Don't try this one at home: warnings from the *Gentleman's Magazine*

On Mondays, in normal times, I seek out and transcribe references to the historic county of Surrey in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. From 1731 to 1868 that publication, the first to be named a magazine, informed, amused, delighted, infuriated its readers across Britain with a monthly helping of news, reviews, correspondence, and lists of births, deaths and marriages. Some members may recall Julian Pooley's sparkling talk on the magazine which he gave to our Society a few years ago.

The project on which I and others are engaged at present should culminate in the publication of a series of books containing every mention of Surrey, backed up by explanatory footnotes, which will, we hope, be of use to local and family historians. They will also, I am sure, intrigue and delight any ordinary reader who enjoys dipping into the past.

For the producers of the *Gentleman's Magazine* had a zest for life, an eager curiosity, and a policy of including matter far different from the serious correspondence from earnest clergymen that was often to be found

in its letter pages. From some of its more quirky stories a moral might certainly be drawn. A reader would at least conclude that there were some things which it was not wise to attempt.

A couple come easily to mind. Here is an extract from the magazine for 1789, Part 1.

'The captain of a vessel lying off Rotherhithe, the better to secure the ship's cable, made an agreement with a publican for fastening a cable to his premises; in consequence a small anchor was carried on shore and deposited in the cellar, while another cable was fastened round a beam in another part of the house. In the night the ship veered about, and the cables holding fast, carried away the beam and levelled the house to the ground; by which accident five persons asleep in their beds were killed.' Stupid? Thoughtless? How long had the captain been in the bar before he proposed this scheme? The tidal Thames, up, down and flowing swiftly...

And what about this summertime bet in 1819? This story concerns a man from the Frimley area, a man so greedy that he was nicknamed 'The Cormorant'. He accepted a bet that he would, in the space of ten

minutes, consume two pounds of raw salmon and six live wasps, complete with stings. This he did. He then offered, in return for money, to eat wasps wholesale, and he set about doing so. He swallowed tens of wasps, if not dozens, but presently his throat and mouth swelled so that he could scarcely breathe, and he began to behave as if he were mad. So he stopped. Surely no one had expected the wasps to go quietly, not to fight back? And who caught the wasps and served them up?

Jan Michell

Snippets from Helen and Dick's work on the 1911 census:

The greatest number of children born was 18 to Mrs Lydia F (aged 49) in Sandy Lane, Maybury. She was the wife of a gardener and had been married for 30 years. 11 of her children were living, 7 had died.

-o O o-

The couple married the longest (59 years) were Mr and Mrs G from Cheapside in Horsell. Mr G was a gardener.

-o O o-

A Lodging House in Goldsworth Road was home to 22 people in 11 rooms. Most were labourers, either general, bricklayer's, builder's or railway contractor's. There was a groom, a

house painter and a hawker. They were aged between 23 and 62 with most being in their thirties or forties. The final lodger was described as an 'acrobat and conjurer', working on his 'own account' aged 84! The mind boggles.

-o O o-

In the 'Nationality' column in one entry in Board School Road, we have the comment 'no foreigners in our family'.

-o O o-

In Courtenay Road, the eldest son in a very large family gave his occupation as 'going to Australia'. Who can blame him!

-o O o-

HG Wells' House - Thirteen Years on.
...

From curiosity I checked the 1911 Census to see who was now living in H.G.Wells' erstwhile home (1895-8) at 141, Maybury Road. This 5-room house was now split into two. Three rooms were home to a 44 year-old plasterer/labourer, his wife and four children. The remaining two rooms were occupied by a young clock and watchmaker, his wife, two infant daughters, and his sister.

A bit noisier and more crowded than during HG's tenure, perhaps?

-o O o-

Helen Gristwood & Dick Carpenter



Cab or possibly private carriage passing the old Red House Hotel on the corner of Chobham Road and Chertsey Road, c. 1906



Carters in Chertsey Road, c. 1905