



Cumbria at War 1939 - 1945

A Role Play Exercise in seven chapters for use in secondary schools

Chapter 4

Home Supplies

Rationing, Shortages and the Black Market.

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A Cumbria Archive Service learning resource for secondary schools,
created by Guy Woolnough September 2009, modified for web April 2011

Food, clothing, fuel, indeed almost everything that people wanted, was in short supply during the war. Some things, like food, were rationed; other things, like whisky and tobacco, were extremely difficult to get hold of. Nothing was to be wasted: all over Britain, everyone was told that it was very important to recycle things and to economise to help win the war.

Advert from *Whitehaven News*, 29th August 1940

"UP HOUSEWIVES AND AT 'EM!"



YOU can have a "smack at 'em." There are war weapons in *your* household waste. Every scrap counts, so save every scrap — of paper, metal, bones.* Keep them separate and put them by the dustbin every collection day. They are wanted urgently to make munitions. Let's all get right into action *now*!

* Also put out waste food if this is collected in your district.



PUT THEM OUT CAREFULLY
Follow the instructions you will receive, care saves time, space, money.

THEY WILL BE COLLECTED
Councils in districts with a population over 10,000 must arrange for collection. You can help to see that the collection is well and thoroughly done. Send suggestions to your Councils.

THEY WILL BE USED
Every scrap that is put out according to instructions and efficiently collected will be used for victory.

This is what your back door should look like on collection day.



ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF SUPPLY

Because of the shortages and rationing, there were hundreds of regulations that had to be followed by businesses and individuals.

Here is the licence issued to Carr's Biscuits at Carlisle.

It told the firm exactly what they were allowed to make.

R.L. 1.
Licence No. R.L.1515.
N.W. 12

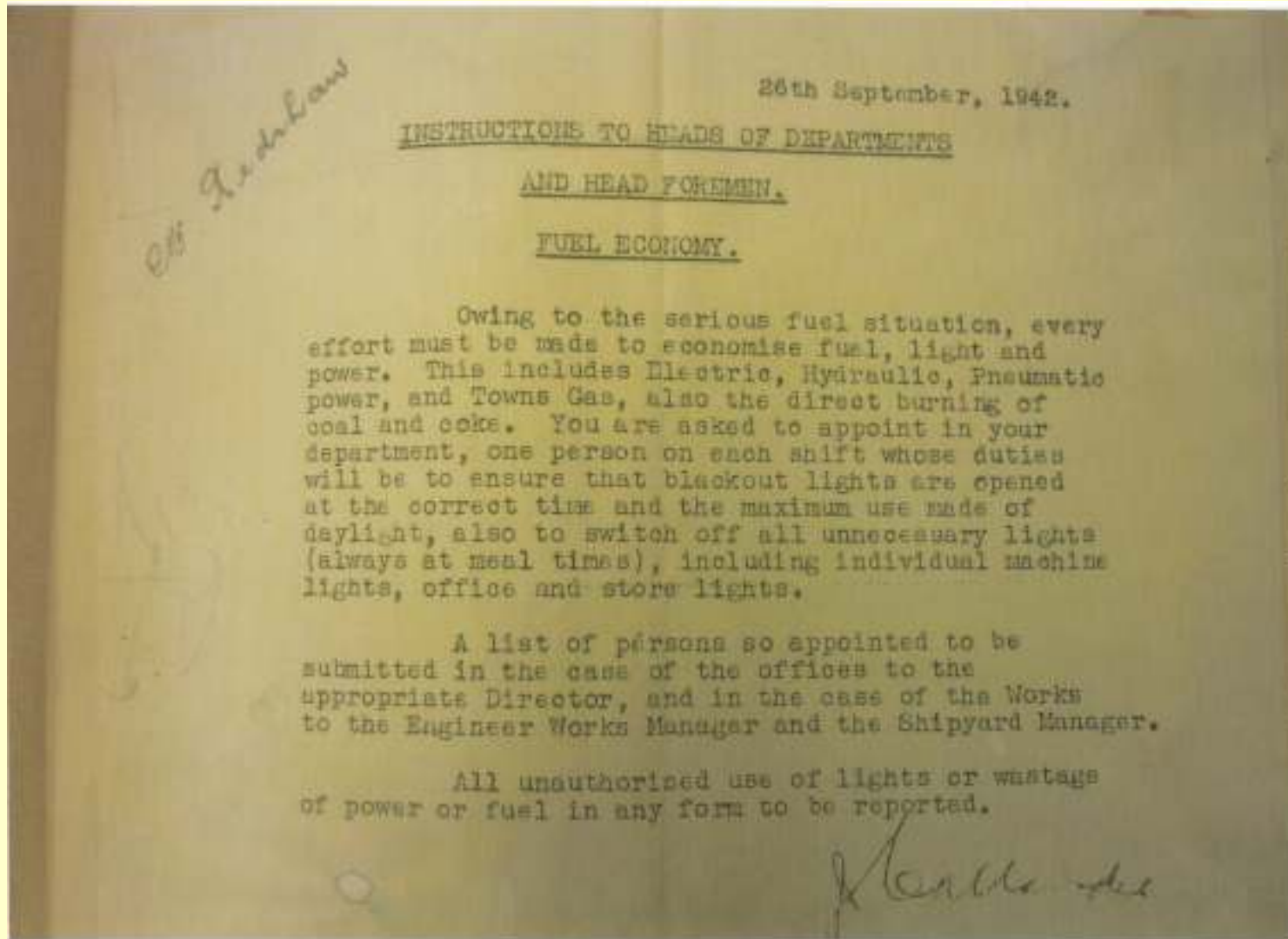
FOOD CONTROL.

LICENCE TO TRADE IN FOODSTUFFS BY RETAIL.

The Food Control Committee for the district of
CITY OF CARLISLE
hereby licence
MESSRS CARR AND COMPANY.
as a Retail Dealer in
Biscuits, rusks and Crispbreads:
Cakes:
Chocolate and Sugar Confectionery:
in respect of the business carried on at
THE BISCUITS WORKS, CALDWINGATE,
CARLISLE.
Signed on behalf of the Food Control Committee.
Signature, *David G. Marshall*
Food Executive Officer.
Date, 29 DEC 1941

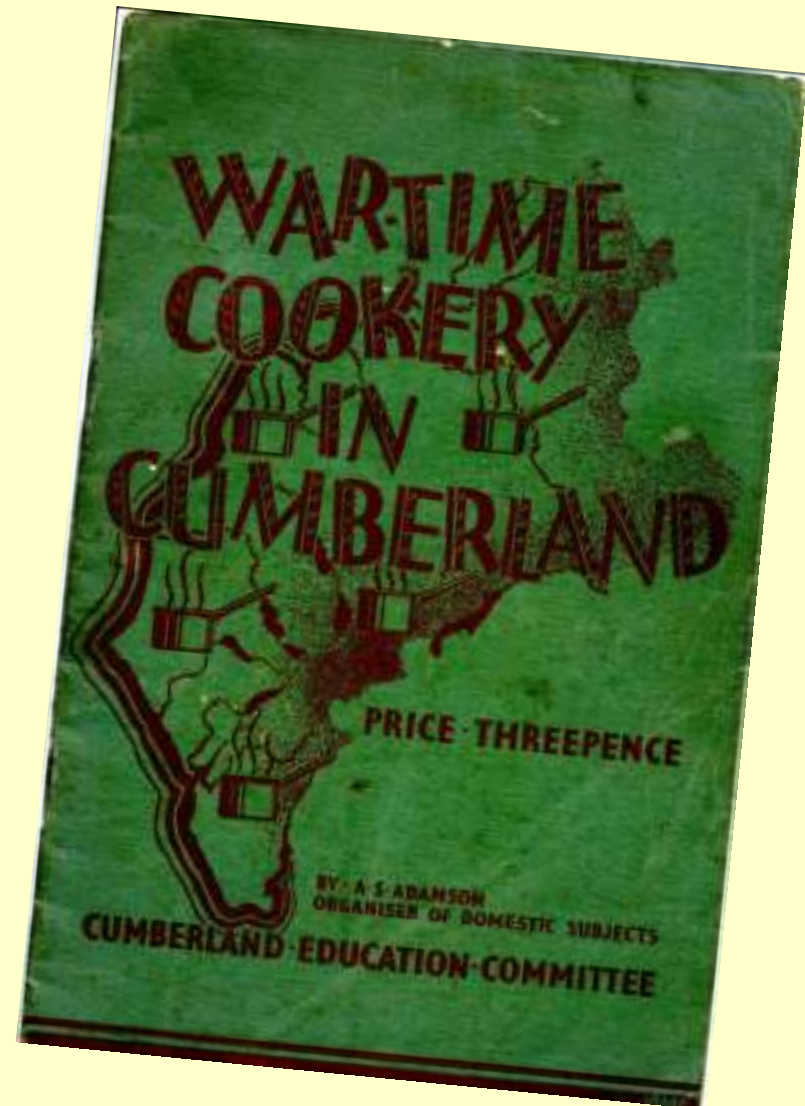
CITY OF CARLISLE
FOOD CONTROL COMMITTEE

Here are instructions about fuel economy, issued to people working at Barrow ship yards.



You can see that you would be in trouble if you left the lights on.

The local authorities gave advice to people to help them manage on the rations they were allowed. Here is a war time recipe book printed and distributed by Cumberland Education Committee in 1940.



Dear Mrs. Cumberland,

In the piping days of Peace you set a grand table. Your tatie-pot, with such a variety of succulent ingredients, is a dish for the Gods. Who serves such plate cakes as I shared once with Mr. Tom Cape at a "do" in the West? That home-cured ham I had that day on the fell-side is an abiding memory, and what pounds and pounds of sausage have gone to enliven the breakfasts of my Southern friends! Besides, what other County tops off with rum-butter?

But these, alas! are Peace-time dishes. Most of them have been denied to you for a long time if your man has been a sufferer in West Cumberland's industrial sickness. Nowadays the exigencies of War make all of us think again.

Meat, butter, sugar. Tatie-pot, rum-butter, and plate-cake! These are rationed, not very tightly at present, but we must expect greater calls as the War goes on. If we can save these things, produce more at home, and build our feeding round what we produce we shall save tonnage, or free it for purposes that may well mean the saving of our own lads' lives.

Your own County Education Committee has tried to help by producing this little book, which Miss Adamson has prepared specially to suit Cumberland's War-time needs. It is not supposed to be a complete cookery book. It sets out to give War-time hints and War-time recipes for economical dishes, planned to give the three essential types of food—for energy and heat, for body-building and restoring, and for protection against disease.

Alongside this book the Committee has...

The introduction tells you how different things were, comparing war time Cumbria with the days before the war. It also tells you that the responsibility for winning the war in the kitchen fell to the women. You can see that the authorities expected things would get worse. They were right.



Girl Guides collecting rose hips at Ulverston

It was very difficult to get imported fruit like oranges and lemons in the war. There was a danger that people would not get enough vitamin C in their diet. But rose hips, that grow wild in the hedges, have plenty of vitamin C. So Boy Scouts and Girl Guides volunteered to collect the hips in the autumn. The fruit was then used to make a cordial that was rich in the vitamin C and also tasted good.

14: Sept, - I had to leave school 1.15 P.M. today to attend to
A.G.C. duties in Egremont and Whitehaven.
18: Sept, - This week we have been busy collecting salvage
for the big two-weeks salvage drive. Prizes have
been given for best collections of wool, rags,
rubber etc.. There will be further competitions during
the coming week. Attendance for week = 84.4%
next week 1.11 12 P

Collecting things for recycling was called “salvage” in the war. Here the pupils at Gosforth School were “doing their bit” to help win the war by having a two week salvage drive. You can see what they were collecting.

This is the head-teacher's entry in the school log book.

Cumbria was, as it still is, an agricultural county that produced far more food than Cumbrians could possibly eat. But the Government expected most of this food to be exported from Cumbria to help feed the rest of Britain. Very quickly, after rationing was introduced, a “Black Market” grew up. If you had the money, you could get what you wanted “under the counter.” Any Cumbrian farmers who were dishonest could make a lot of money on the side. One woman, who was born in 1932 and brought up on Sparrowmire Farm near Kendal, said in an interview:

They'd a lot of black marketing going on during the war. Most of the farmers was in among it, you know, and they would do it of a night they would go to different farms to kill these pigs and butcher them and then they'd have the hams and flitches and everything and to deliver them from one farm to another, they used to put them on the bottom of the wagon and they'd put straw on top, and then they would perhaps put 20 or 30 piglets, so that if they were pulled up he was just delivering piglets They used to come from Manchester and Liverpool, all over, to buy this.

The war time newspapers were full of reports of people who had been caught in black marketeering. Here are three examples from the *Whitehaven News*:

8th January, 1942
**SOLD EGGS ABOVE
CONTROL PRICE.**
Cleator Moor Woman fined
For selling eggs above the
maximum price, Mrs Marie
Simon, a local egg dealer,
was fined £5 by Cleator
Moor magistrates on Friday.
(She sold six eggs for 11p)

People needed a ration book to buy things in the shops. Black marketeers would sell things to people who did not have the coupons, but they charged very high prices.

Ration books were often stolen by thieves, so to stop this anyone handling ration coupons that were not their own could be prosecuted.

8th June, 1944
CLOTHING COUPONS
Passed Through Various Hands
On Monday, Emmanuel Wilkinson
(29) labourer, Isabel McCleod (21),
factory worker, Sarah and Joseph
Metcalf, were charged with
illegally transferring clothing
coupons, and Kate B. Taylor (22),
amusement attendant, was
charged with accepting the
coupons. All the defendants
pleaded guilty. Each of the five
defendants was fined £2 and
10sh.6d costs.

Petrol and fuel was very tightly rationed, because it was needed for our planes, tanks ships etc.

Kath Salrein, as soon as she was 17, started driving for her father, who had a garage, with a bus and taxi business.

In this recording, Kath explains how she managed to get the fuel to take her friends to dances in her father's van!

Kath never got caught.

15th June, 1944
PETROL OFFENCES
Whitehaven Firms Explain in Court Prosecutions, taken under the Control of Motor Fuel Order, resulted in the firm of Bie and Conaway and Co., taxi proprietors, Station Road, Whitehaven, being fined a total of £15.17sh.6d, and the firm of T and R Batty, coal agents, Duke Street, Whitehaven, a total of £8.7sh.6d at Whitehaven on Thursday. [The firms had used petrol provided for their business for other purposes, selling it on the black market.]



Follow link on our website to hear how Kath managed to get to dances in the war, and her experiences of the Black Market

SPIVS on VE Day

“Spiv” was the slang word for a black marketeer.

This photo shows what they were supposed to look like,

- Large coat to hide the things they were selling
- Always with a fag, even when tobacco was very difficult to get hold of
- Hat pulled low over the eyes
- Glancing sideways in case a policeman was coming



But the person selling you something “under the counter” was probably just an ordinary man or woman, not really different from anyone else.

People hoped that VE Day meant that rationing and shortages would soon be over, but supplies only got worse after May 1945 as the disruption and destruction caused by the war halted farming and transport in many parts of Europe. Rationing did not end until the 1950's.

Cumbria at War, 1939-1945

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Chapters:

1. Introduction: VE Day, Cumbria, May 1945.
2. In Uniform: those who served in uniform in Cumbria.
3. Working: those who worked in Cumbria to help win the war.
4. Home Supplies: how Cumbrians got what they needed in the war.
5. Away from Home: evacuees, and Cumbrians serving overseas.
6. Missing Home: prisoners of war, Cumbrians and Germans in Cumbria.
7. Not Coming Home: remembering those Cumbrians who fell in the war.