

## Rationing

During World War Two all sorts of essential and non-essential foods were rationed. This meant that people could only buy a certain amount of these foods.

### **When was rationing introduced and when did it end?**

Rationing was introduced at the beginning of 1940.

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, every household had to fill in a form giving details of the people who lived in their house, this became known as national registration day.

Fourteen years of food rationing ended at midnight on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1954.

### **Why was rationing introduced?**

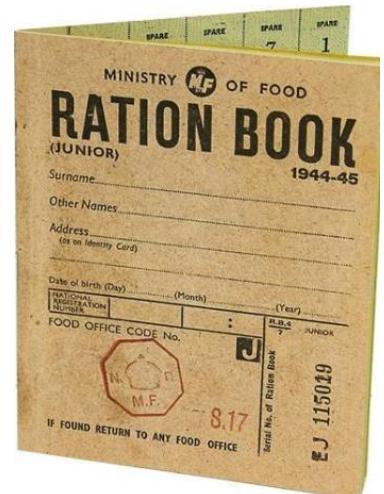
To make the British weak, the Germans tried to cut off their supplies of food and other goods. German submarines attacked many of the ships that were bringing food to Britain. Before the war, Britain imported 55 million tons of food, after the war had begun, this figure had dropped to just 12 million!

### **Ration Books**

The government issued ration books to ensure that everybody got a fair share of the limited food that was available. The government was worried as food became scarcer, prices would rise and poorer people might not be able to afford food. There was also a danger that people would hoard items or stock pile them, leaving none for others.

The ration book became key for survival. Every member of the public was issued with one.

They were a book that contained coupons that shopkeepers cut out or signed when people brought food and other items. People still paid for these goods with money, but they also required coupons.



Ration books were different colours. The colour of your ration book was important because it made sure you had the right amount of different coupons and the types of food needed for your health.

Buff-coloured ration books – Most adults had this colour.

Green ration book – pregnant woman, nursing mothers and children under 5. They had first choice of fruit, a daily pint of milk and a double egg supply.

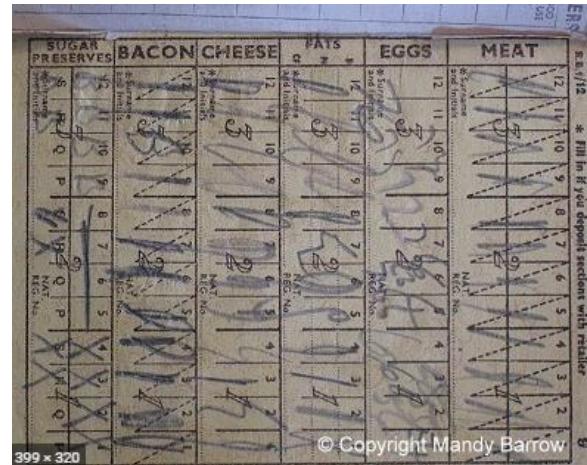
Blue ration books – children 5–16. It was felt important that children had fruit, the full meat ration and half a pint of milk daily. This is the ration book you would have been issued!

### How did rationing work?

Using the information gathered on National Registration Day each year, the government issued every one with an identity card and ration book.

Each family or individual had to register with the local supplier that they would be using. These details were stamped into the book and you could only buy your ration from that specific supplier.

The ration books contained coupons that had to be handed in or signed by the shop keeper every time rationed goods were brought. This meant that people could only buy the amount they were allowed.



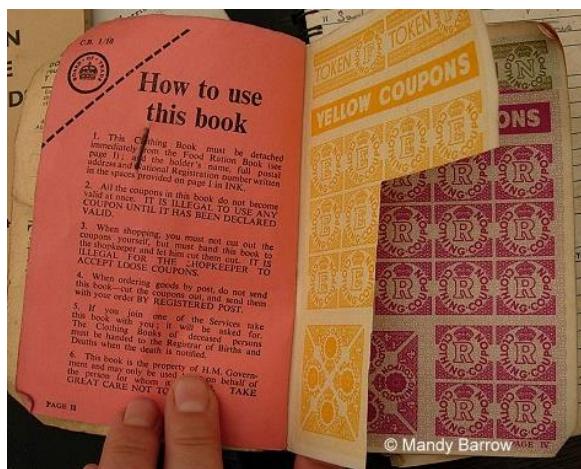
The public were also encouraged to “Dig for Victory” and grow their own fruit and vegetables to help with the war effort.

## Clothes Rationing

It wasn't just food that was rationed during the war, clothes also became scares, so rationing was introduced. Clothes rationing began in June 1941, two years after food rationing began. Clothes rationing then ended in March 1949, therefore it lasted 8 years!

### Why were clothes rationed?

There was a shortage of materials to make clothes during the war, meaning clothes had to be rationed. People were also urged to "Make do and Mend" so that clothing factories could be used to make things for the war effort, rather than clothing. Some clothes factories made parachutes and uniforms needed in the battle against Germany.



### How did clothes rationing work?

Just like food rationing, everyone was given a clothing ration book with coloured coupons inside. Clothing was then given a "coupon value". When buying clothes, people then had to hand their clothing ration book to the book keeper, who cut out the number of relevant coupons. It is important to remember people still had to pay for the

clothing, but they had to have the coupons too!

Each page of coupons was a different colour to stop people using up all their coupons at once. People were only allowed to use one colour at a time. The government would tell people when they could start using their next colour. Some people chose to save their coupons up and use them with the next colour to buy more expensive items.

This system allowed each individual to buy one new set of clothing each year!



### So how many coupons did clothing cost?

Each person was given 66 coupons to last them a year. Later it was reduced to just 45.

However, as children, you would have been given 10 more! This was to allow for you growing out of clothes.

Look at images below, could you make 76 clothing coupons last you a whole year?

Men and Boys		Adult	Child
Unlined mackintosh or cape ..	..	9	7
Other mackintoshes, or raincoat, or overcoat	16	11	
Coat, or jacket, or blazer or like garment ..	13	8	
Waistcoat, or pull-over, or cardigan, or jersey	5	3	
Trousers (other than fustian or corduroy) ..	8	6	
Fustian or corduroy trousers ..	..	5	5
Shorts ..	..	5	3
Overalls, or dungarees or like garment	..	6	4
Dressing-gown or bathing gown	..	8	6
Night-shirt or pair of pyjamas	..	8	6
Shirt, or combinations—woollen	..	8	6
Shirt, or combinations—other material	..	5	4
Pants, or vest, or bathing costume, or child's blouse	..	4	2
Pair of socks or stockings ..	..	3	1
Collar, or tie, or pair of cuffs ..	..	1	1
Two handkerchiefs ..	..	1	1
Scarf, or pair of gloves or mittens ..	..	2	2
Pair of slippers or goloshes ..	..	4	2
Pair of boots or shoes ..	..	7	3
Pair of leggings, gaiters or spats ..	..	3	2

Women and Girls		Adult	Child
Mackintoshes, or coats (over 28 in. long)	..	14	11
or short coat (under 28 in. in length)	..	11	8
Gown, or frock—woollen	..	..	8
Gown, or frock—other material	..	..	5
Skirt, or girl's skirt with bodice ..	..	8	6
Blouse, or sports shirt, or cardigan, or jumper	..	5	3
Skirt, or divided skirt ..	..	7	5
Overalls, or dungarees or like garment	..	6	4
Apron, or pinafore ..	..	..	2
Pyjamas ..	..	..	6
Nightdress ..	..	..	5
Petticoat, or slip, or combination, or camisole, or knickers ..	..	4	3
Other undergarments, including corsets ..	..	3	2
Pair of stockings ..	..	2	1
Pair of socks (ankle length) ..	..	1	1
Collar, or tie, or pair of cuffs ..	..	1	1
Two handkerchiefs ..	..	1	2
Scarf, or pair of gloves or mittens, or muff ..	..	2	2
Pair of slippers, boots or shoes ..	..	5	3

Think about the clothes in your wardrobe at the moment – How many coupons would you need to buy them all?