



Harpenden History Society
 School Resource
 Upper KS2 / KS3

How did the Second World War affect the daily lives of Harpenden residents?

2/7
 (b) **AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS**

Your HOUSE is situated in Sector 7 F
 THE AIR RAID WARDEN'S POST IS 100 Topstreet Way,
 PHONE _____ The Wardens are:

<u>H. G. G. MacLeod</u> <u>100, Topstreet Way,</u> Senior	<u>H. Weatherhead,</u> <u>94, Topstreet Way,</u> Deputy	<u>TOPSTREET WAY</u> <u>L. H. Annetts 67</u> <u>E. R. Smart 95</u> <u>J. L. Kirker 97</u>	<u>PICCOTT'S HILL LANE</u> <u>W. G. Maciner "Brackendale"</u> <u>G. W. Facer "C. Waston"</u> <u>Peter Thorpe "Highfield"</u> <u>W. W. Feast "Aimhaley"</u>
<u>HIGHFIELD AVENUE</u> <u>G. P. Peggains 1</u> <u>S. E. Bangs 17</u> <u>J. S. Hawkins 57</u> <u>H. G. Woods 20</u>	<u>HIGHFIELD AVENUE</u> <u>J. Stokes 22</u> <u>L. Royle 24</u> <u>P. Falwell 26</u> <u>W. J. Stevenson 30</u>	<u>HIGHFIELD AVENUE</u> <u>H. W. Blades 44</u>	

THE POST will always be manned during AIR RAIDS. To get help during a raid, phone _____ or apply in person.

AIR RAID WARNING SIGNALS ARE:
 WARNING:—2 minutes fluctuating warbling note. ALL CLEAR:—2 minutes steady blast.
 Given on Steam Syren.
 WARDEN'S WARNING:—Sharp blasts on Whistle. ALL CLEAR:—Hand Bell.
 GAS WARNING:—RATTLE (on with your mask and keep on until you hear hand bell).
 IF IN DOUBT ABOUT YOUR GAS MASK call or phone your Section Post. Senior Warden will be pleased to help you. Get to know him.
 DON'T interfere with your Gas Mask. DON'T carry it by the straps. Make a case for it and in time of war never be without it. Learn to put it on and take it off in the correct way.
 STORE in an airtight tin in a cool, dry place. Strong light, heat or damp are not good for it.

READ THIS CAREFULLY and hang it in your hall
 Issued by Harpenden Urban District Council Air Raid Precaution Office

Teacher's notes

Background information

Harpenden made direct contributions to the fighting of the Second World War. The town war memorial records the names of 108 servicemen who lost their lives in active duty between 1939 and 1945. During the war soldiers from all parts of the United Kingdom were billeted in empty houses in the town. Most of these were here when not on active duty, but up to 400 of them were involved in top secret intelligence work taking place in Rothamsted Manor – intercepting and recording German morse code signals, then sending these off to the code-breakers at Bletchley Park. Residents of Harpenden would not have been informed of the top secret activities, but they would have known that enemy soldiers were present in the town, confined to the prisoner of war camp in Batford.

However the impact of the war on daily life went far beyond these contributions to the fighting, as Harpenden was part of the 'home front'. It is this aspect of the war experience that this resource focuses on. As in other towns in Britain, the ever present threat of aerial bombardment meant that a local 'army' of volunteers needed to organise themselves to prepare for this eventuality. The town was divided into sectors with a senior warden in charge of ensuring the sector was equipped to deal with fires resulting from bombings. Stirrup pumps were purchased, details of every house recorded, and groups of fire watchers were on duty through the night. Bomb shelters were put up in many gardens, and three public shelters were built in the centre of town. First Aid posts were established throughout the town, whilst local volunteers like Ethel Howard undertook first aid training and learned to drive ambulances. In the end, Harpenden escaped relatively lightly: although over 2,000 bombs were dropped (mostly incendiary rather than high explosive) and 180 houses were damaged, only one private house (10 Crabtree Lane) and two other buildings (Batford Methodist Church and Badminton Hall) were significantly damaged. However, the threat of bombing was still a daily fear and throughout the war 941 alerts were given.

In addition to voluntary duties to deal with bombing raids, Harpenden residents had to contend with the introduction of rationing for food, clothing and other essential items. As many items could only be purchased with coupons even the wealthier residents had to learn to 'mend and make do'. New allotments were created and gardens given over to the cultivation of fruit and vegetables to supplement the rations. The land army even planted wheat on Harpenden common.

Another way in which Harpenden residents made a huge and valuable contribution to the war was by taking in evacuees from other, higher risk parts of the country. Up to 2,500 children and adults were moved here during the war. There is a detailed section on this in another part of the website, which includes the memories of evacuees themselves: http://www.harpenden-history.org.uk/category_id_93.aspx If you do not intend to focus on this in a separate lesson, students should be made aware of it in this lesson.

LESSON PLAN

Starter activity – mystery object

Tell the pupils that today you will be using documents from the time of World War II, and you are going to begin by looking at an artefact. (If you have borrowed the canning machine from the history society, otherwise start at B with the photograph.)

A. Object handling

Tell them you have got something that was vital to Harpenden's war effort and show them the object.

(This is a canning machine, which would be used to preserve local fruits and vegetables. During rationing supplies of these were limited, so people were encouraged by central government and local organisations to cultivate and preserve vegetables and fruit, in order to supplement their diets.)

- Can they work out what it is?
- How did it help in the war?

Use guided questioning to draw their attention to different parts, and think quite specifically about what these parts could have been used for so that their conclusions are based on the evidence in front of them.

B. Photograph

Introduce the photograph of the object in use (Document 1), explaining that often comparing sources can help you to make sense of them.

Start by showing them just the central part of the image showing – the canning machine and hands. Whose hands do they think they will be? Then reveal the rest of the picture. How does this change their opinion of what the machine could be?

Ask them if they can deduce what the situation is? Is she in her home? Look at the background, the way the chairs are laid out – what does it make them think of? Look at the way she is standing, with her front facing towards the camera?

C. Link to main activity

Return to the question of how the canning machine helped during the war. Explain that one of the key features of the Second World War was that it was a **total war** – it impacted on the lives of the civilian population (bombing, rationing due to trade blockades) and required their contribution both in creating weapons, transport and other equipment for the soldiers and in dealing with the issues created by the bombing and trade blockades (fire watchers, ambulance drivers, growing and preserving food). Harpenden, like every part of the country, was a **home front** – everyone was impacted by the war, and a huge proportion of the population contributed to the war effort.

Main activity

Introduce enquiry question:

How did the Second World War affect the daily lives of Harpenden residents?

Students will be investigating this question themselves, looking at various documents (documents 2-18) from Harpenden during the war that have been carefully preserved (and copies of which are kept in the local history society archives).

It is a good idea to remove the descriptions from the documents, as this encourages the children to really engage with them and it makes it feel more like “real history”. Colour copies also make a huge difference to how real the documents feel, and are worth the extra printing expense.

Students work in pairs with one of the sources (documents 2-18), using it as evidence to help them answer the enquiry question. They need to fill in the worksheet.

Students then share their findings with the class.

What did their source(s) show about how life in Harpenden was affected by the war.

You could group them first so that they share within categories and then choose one person to present back to the rest of the class:

- Precautions / reactions to bombing damage
- Rationing and conserving resources
- Helping the war effort

(See List of documents at end)

Plenary

Pair and share activity:

- Do you think the war affected everyone in Harpenden to the same extent?
- What kinds of people have we come across today that would have been most affected? Was there anyone named in your source whose life would have been very altered?
- Was anyone unaffected?

How did the Second World War affect the daily lives of Harpenden residents?

Description of source	What activity relating to the war effort did you learn about?	Who in Harpenden would have been affected or involved in this?	How did it help the war effort?

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document number	Document description
Starter activity	
-	Canning machine (borrow from the Local History Society)
1	Photograph of Mrs Grant of British Legion (women's section) demonstrating a "HomeCan" machine (November 1941)
Precautions against damage and injury from bombing	
2	Public Notice from Harpenden Urban District Council ordering loft clearance, 1940
3	Air Raid Precautions: notice for householders to hang on wall listing air raid wardens and providing instructions for air raid warnings
4	Air Raid Precautions – volunteer form listing duties for men and women
5	Sector W5 Block A - Filled in form listing details of local houses for use during rescue and fire fighting (February 1941)
6	Letter from the committee requesting more fire watchers (undated, probably 1941)
7	Handwritten draft memo to Fire Parties, explaining procedures for fire watching
8	Public notice: Air Raid Precautions – lists sirens for air raid warnings, public shelters and First Aid station
9	a. British Red Cross Society certificate for ARP Training, for Miss Ethel Howard (November 1942) b. ARP Ambulance Driver certificate for Miss Howard (July 1942)
10	Telephone message: a bomb 1 mile from Harpenden Junction
11	Air Raid Warden certificate (and outside of the leather casing) for M.R. Mount (September 1938)
Contribution to the fighting	
12	Poster requesting scrap iron and steel
13	Photograph of Members of British Legion, Women's section, making camouflage nets (1941)
14	Photograph of scrap metal salvage team in April 1943
Rationing and conserving resources	
15	Mend and Make do booklet
16	Clothing Coupons
17	Harpenden Free Press advertising grocers for people to register with when food rationing is introduced (29 September 1939)
18	War Economy Label (so people could re-use envelopes)