

Rationing

What was food rationing?

Food rationing was when the Government controlled how much people were allowed to have of certain foods.

Fears and causes of shortages

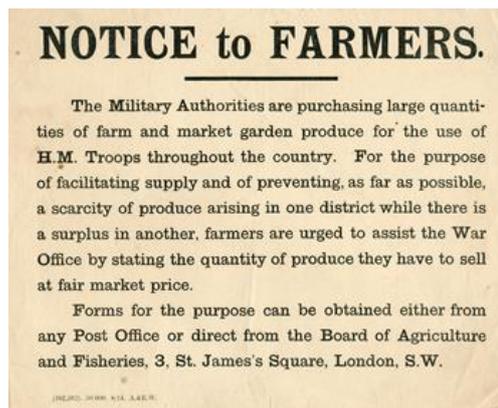
When war first broke out people in Britain panicked and started stocking up on food. However this fear did not last long. More worrying to British families were the rising prices imposed by the government. Large amounts of food needed to be produced for the army. Soon farmers were told to provide produce to the Military at a fair price. This was used to feed the thousands of volunteers joining the army at training camps in the UK and to send abroad to British soldiers on the Front Line. These soldiers in 1914 were getting 10oz (28g) of meat and 8oz (23g) of vegetables a day. In fact many soldiers at the start of the war were eating better than they had at home.

But things got harder. Men who would normally work the fields were sent to war leaving women and children to take on the work. This led to the forming of the Women's Land Army an organised group of volunteers sent to work on the farms. But there were other factors causing problems. Essential working farm animals like horses were also being taken to war. They would pull weapons and supply carts and even carry men on the Front Line. This made the farm labour much harder for the women and children.

In 1917 the Germans started unrestricted submarine warfare. This meant that they didn't just sink British ships but any ship supplying Britain from the US or other neutral countries. This not only

outraged the Americans enough that they joined the war for the Allies but made certain foods much harder to get in Britain. Prices rose even higher than before. Men on the Front Line had their food rations reduced. And at home rationing began.

At first local governments managed their own schemes but as prices rose people resented those who could still afford to buy what they wanted. So **national** rationing was introduced. It began in 1918 and included food-stuffs such as sugar, butter, jam and meat. The amount of these foods



Poster: 1998.1686 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum & Art Gallery

Horsham poster from the start of the war address to Farmers.

National Rationing key dates

Sugar	31 st Dec 1917 - 29 th Nov 1920
Butter	14 th Jul 1918 - 30 th May 1920
Margarine	14 th Jul 1918 - 16 th Feb 1919
Lard	14 th Jul 1918 - 16 th Dec 1918
Butcher's Meat (uncooked)	14 th Jul 1918 - 15 th Dec 1919
Bacon and Ham	14 th Jul 1918 - 28 th Jul 1918
Jam	2 nd Nov 1918 - 15 th Apr 1919
Tea *	14 th Jul 1918 - 2 nd Dec 1918

*you could only get tea if you 'registered' but the amount each person got was not actually rationed.

WWI



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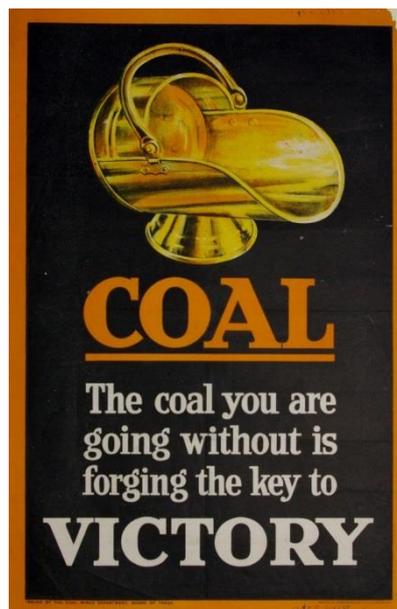
a family could buy from the shops was restricted. To make sure no one took more than their share, ration books were given out. These had coupons inside for each of the rationed foods. You could only use these coupons in certain shops.

If you misused your ration book or got food illegally you could be fined or even imprisoned. The West Sussex County Times reported that a soldier in Horsham was given 3 months hard labour for tricking the woman he was billeted with into giving him more than his share of food.

People were also encouraged to grow their own vegetables and preserve what they could for winter. To help out some women's groups in Horsham taught classes on how to preserve fruits.

What else was rationed?

The government also controlled the amount of fuel people used. In 1917 as part of the Defence of the Realm Act the Ministry of Munitions took control of the coal industry. This led to coal being rationed towards the end of War.



Poster: 1999.751 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum & Art Gallery

This poster was issued by the Coal Mines Department of the Board of Trade and used in Horsham. Coal was one of the fuels restricted during the war in Horsham.

Glossary

Produce	- Something made or grown
Front Line	- The front of the fighting in a war
Unrestricted	- Unlimited or unconfined
Neutral	- Stays out of arguments and will not support either side in a conflict.
Allies	- This was the nickname for the Triple Entente countries, Britain, France and Russia.
Resented	- To feel anger or bitterness towards something especially if unfair
Restricted	- Limited or confined
Billeted	- When a soldier was sent to stay in non-military accommodation e.g. a private home.

Find out more

- **British Library**, 2014. *World War One Articles*. www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles
- **BBC Schools World War One**, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/>
- **Mitchell, J. and Vaughan, E.** 2008, *We'll Keep the Home Fires Burning: Horsham During World War One*, Horsham District Council



References

- **Horsham Museum**, Albery Poster Collection www.horshamposters.com
- **Knight, J.** 2011 *Horsham's History, 1914-1918 Volume 4* Horsham District Council
- **Knight, J. and Mitchell, J.** 2014 *Horsham on the Front Line 1914-1918* Horsham Museum Society
- **Stevenson, D.** 2014 'The war effort at Home (movement into war production, rationing and food supply)' *British Library Articles* <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/the-war-effort-at-home>
- **Mitchell, J. and Vaughan, E.** 2008, *We'll Keep the Home Fires Burning: Horsham During World War One*, Horsham District Council
- Extracts from the **West Sussex County Times** accessed via Horsham Library

Images

- Posters from **Horsham Museum**, Albery Poster Collection www.horshamposters.com

