

Making Do! - Christmas on the Home Front

Bombs, Rationing, The Blackout and Christmas Cheer!

Although the war on the Home Front brought with it unimaginable hardships particularly as the war dragged on, Christmas was a time where people tried to forget these hardships and remember what it was like before the bombs, rationing and blackouts.

Even though food was short many people still managed to find a turkey, chicken, duck, goose or pheasant for their Christmas lunch which helped to supplement the endless mountains of carrots and potatoes. As was highlighted with the Dr Carrot advertising campaign the former were supposed to help improve people's night vision and prevent unnecessary accidents in the blackout. It is a sad fact that many people were killed during the early days of the blackout as a result of walking in front of moving cars.

In the absence of fresh tropical fruits carrots were also used to help flavour cakes.

Mince Pies

Mince pies were always a traditional Christmas treat so housewives made do and improvised. It was suggested that mincemeat could go that little bit further if grated or finely diced apple or apple pulp was added to the ingredients. If mincemeat was not available then spices could be added with dried fruit, dates or cooked prunes. No one ever complained though as there was no sign of a carrot anywhere!



PICTURE: Let out in the cold. Hitler gets his come-uppance!



PICTURE: Father Christmas goes to war in the Christmas Radio Times of 1942.



PICTURE: People are urged to save, invest and help the war effort (even at Christmas!)

Christmas Trees and Decorations

It was impossible to get a tree for Christmas because of the timber restrictions and even those who were fortunate to find one paid extortionate prices. They were often disappointed as well because these trees were merely smaller cut offs of bigger trees.

If you were lucky enough to have a Christmas tree then the authorities sternly reminded you that it was inadvisable to use candles on the trees as you never knew when a German bomb might cause an electrical blackout and these candles might be needed.

As for Christmas decorations these were seen as luxury items and not available in the shops. Most people just relied on their old decorations that they had purchased before the war. These were enough to help spread a little bit of Christmas cheer.

The Careless Talk campaign also remained clear in people's minds especially at Christmas and warned against loose talk. An example of a seasonal Careless Talk poster can be seen in this section.

(For more information on the Careless Talk Costs Lives poster campaign see our separate You Never Know Who's Listening page.)

Christmas was a particularly difficult time for children, especially those that had been evacuated and were now living in strange homes far away from their parents.

For those that were still with their parents toys were scarce with all the toyshops displaying empty shelves. After all kapok was needed more for lifejackets than for teddy bears!



PICTURE: A British poster warning against loose talk at Christmas.

Games at Christmas

For some, indulgence was simply a quiet time at home with loved ones and the radio. For others card games such as Rummy were the order of the day or reading out loud to each other. All in all the British people made do and celebrated Christmas as best they could praying that the hostilities in Europe and all over the world would soon be at an end.