

Object(s): Dig for Victory Leaflets

Object Number(s): STMEA:1991-21.1 - STMEA:1991-21.10

Researcher details: Stewart Murphy, Volunteer

Dig for Victory Leaflets

These leaflets are from the Dig for Victory campaign, a propaganda campaign which was designed to increase the availability of food while also keeping civilian morale high.^{1 2} They contain instructions and advice to help members of the public adopt animal husbandry and farming, to supplement rationed foodstuffs.

Most village cottages and houses had gardens large enough to provide ample space to grow all the vegetables needed by the household during the year. There was usually also enough space to keep chickens for both meat and eggs and many households also kept a pig which was fed on the food scraps from the house and was slaughtered when it was big enough. Tame rabbits were also kept to provide meat rather than as pets for the children and wild rabbits were also caught and were available either in the village butcher's shop or from the local poacher.³

This collection of leaflets was discovered in a tin in the donor's father's shed, but probably belonged to the donor's grandfather. The owner of the leaflets grew vegetables during the war and probably also had an allotment. The general wear and tear on these leaflets indicates that they were handled with some frequency. Marks have been made in pencil along the side of an allotment plan, perhaps indicating which vegetables he had decided to grow that year.

Large amounts of land were turned over to cultivation, but growing vegetables at home could be difficult. Mistakes could lead to crop failure, as could inclement weather.⁴ He, like many others, may have used these leaflets as reference material throughout the war and in later life. These particular leaflets were used in Ipswich, but the campaign had both a national and a global reach. It is likely there were also sentimental reasons to keep them, as mementos of the war.

Due to the war, everyday foodstuffs that we now take for granted became luxuries under a stringent rationing system. People went to great lengths to grow luxury produce at home. Tobacco was in short supply during the war, leading some allotment owners to grow their own tobacco plants.⁵

Tobacco was in very short supply and so dad grew his own, which he matured in dried milk tins in the airing cupboard, thus fumigating our underwear. One of our jobs was to cut up the

¹ A Boy's Wartime Memories of Suffolk,
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/54/a3343754.shtml>

² <http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107597.html>

³ A Boy's Wartime Memories of Suffolk,
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/54/a3343754.shtml>

⁴ Dig for Victory, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a3910772.shtml>

⁵ Dig for Victory, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a3910772.shtml>



Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1DL

Tel: 01449 612229

www.eastanglianlife.org.uk

tobacco leaves for him to make into cigarettes. As a joke, my brother and I added chopped elastic bands to the mixture. This resulted in a series of coughing fits and comments such as "By gum, this is strong!".⁶

Personal relationships were key because some shopkeepers would set aside produce for their favourite customers.⁷ A woman living in Ipswich recorded her delight at securing 3 ounces of cheese in November 1940, "the first we have had for weeks".⁸ Animal products were expensive to buy, leading many to keep rabbits, chickens, and pigs at home.⁹ To reduce waste, kitchen scraps were fed to the animals.

⁶ Dig for Victory, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a3910772.shtml>

⁷ Extracts from Winifred Basham's diary 1939-1945 Chapter 4, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/14/a2854514.shtml>

⁸ Extracts from Winifred Basham's diary 1939-1945 Chapter 2, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/98/a2854398.shtml>

⁹ A Boy's Wartime Memories of Suffolk, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/54/a3343754.shtml>