

# Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

## RATIONING

### Rationing through the war in Worthing [five pages]

Extracts from *Despatches from the Home Front, The War Diaries of Joan Strange 1939-1945* (Monarch Publications, 1989)

#### 1939

**September 18<sup>th</sup>** At last my bedroom is 'blacked out' and I can write my diary in bed! On Sunday the Beermanns and I blackberried in the morning as Mother managed to get some preserving sugar.

**October 14<sup>th</sup>** Mother and I set forth for our belated 'summer' holiday! By dint of cycling for my work I've saved some petrol for the trip up to Aunt Anne's at Cheltenham. I get only fourteen gallons a month.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>** Mother shopped in the afternoon and found difficulty procuring butter – none at Sainsburys, ½lb at Maypole but as much as she liked at the International! Dog meat is very scarce and sugar is erratic.

**October 27<sup>th</sup>** Lost my supplementary petrol ration vouchers! Blow. Hitler again! Got late for my first patient but found them later.

**October 28<sup>th</sup>** Still vilely cold, so no tennis. Shopped in afternoon. Couldn't help noticing the change in the shops – in Woolworths there are many things missing, eg notepaper and already toys and other articles are becoming war-influenced – dolls in Red Cross uniform for example. Butter could only be bought in ½lbs today and meat, although plentiful, was limited to certain joints and it's goodbye to our tomorrow's pork!

#### 1940

**July 8<sup>th</sup>** The Food Controller broadcast this evening that tea is to be rationed to 2oz per person from tomorrow! Also margarine. There is plenty of food but it must be stored as far as possible.

**July 26<sup>th</sup>** The Havant-Davieses to tea: they brought their own tea and sugar!

**October 18<sup>th</sup>** Silk stockings are now not to be sold to the public - they are needed for our export trade and also for war purposes.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>** Lord Woolton says we shall have to alter our diets – less food is to come by ships as the ships are needed for war material. The U-boat campaign is proving very virulent – sometimes we lose over twenty ships in a week.

#### 1941

**January 1<sup>st</sup>** Major Cave said that Lloyds London are laying five to two peace (and victory of course) will be here by June *this year!* Hitler's plans are going more and more awry – the occupied countries are more and more restive under German domination. Italy is going downhill fast. We are mastering the U-boat menace and our morale is good!

Meat is scarce in Worthing this week – in fact it's almost non-existent! But I was able to buy 1 lb of lemons today!

**February 9<sup>th</sup>** Benghazi was captured two days ago. This is *terrifically important*. Here invasion threats are still very much to the fore. The greengrocers are a very

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sorry sight – very little fruit and no onions. Leeks 4d or 5d each. Plenty of potatoes and carrots though. Sweet shops are shut for days at a time and one jeweller only opens for the mornings – no Swiss stuff, I suppose.

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>** Up to London to a Massage meeting. I caught the 6.28 back and as there was no 'alert' the train had its lights on. There were several men in the carriage who'd been to a football match and their conversation was a great relief and contrast to the confounded old war! They'd got a huge packet of real ham sandwiches and I was offered one – you can't get ham these days. In fact things really are a bit difficult. Seville oranges are supposed to be in but no extra sugar is allowed. Marmalade is unobtainable at the moment. The fruit and sweet shops are the most desolate.

**April 5<sup>th</sup>** Lyons have ½ lb packets of pastry and unless you get there at 8am you can't get any! A man had even cycled in from Rustington to get some. The famous home-made sweet shop at Broadwater 'Luffs' was open when I passed this morning so I went in and got a whole pound – still only 2/4d. Miss Luff is said to make all the sweets herself. Two hours later it was shut – the whole month's supply sold out. Went to the Wooltons' Café in Lyndhurst Road and had a wonderful 'communal meal'. Soup 1d, choice of meat ( I had liver and sausage) and two vegetables 5d, choice of pudding (rice or sultana batter) 2d and cup of tea 1d. The public is being encouraged to eat there but one feels one should leave it to the needy. Unobtainable at the moment are onions, oranges, lemons and grapefruit and marmalade. Rare commodities are bird seed, cheese, chocs, sweets, biscuits, tomato soup, eggs, meat and dried fruit.

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>** Milk has been rationed. Paper has been further reduced – The telegraph is down to a double sheet on some days and is now 1½d.

**May 4<sup>th</sup>** Mother and I ate one small orange between us today! Lovely! They were thirty-six for 1/- before the war. We decided the skin must not be wasted so it's to be grated and used in a baked pudding! Cooking is very difficult and monotonous these days.

**May 22<sup>nd</sup>** I thought I would mention food today. It is the most talked about subject now that Hess is stale! I actually brought Mother some salt-cod from Godalming but she wasn't very keen! I was lucky today and bought ½lb of currants quite by chance. I had posted a parcel of flowers to one of Kit's bombed tenants and the man who also has a grocer's shop asked if I'd care to have some! I was lucky last Sunday too as Frammie, the nurseryman, gave me six ripe tomatoes and they are about 5/- a lb in the shops.

**August 9<sup>th</sup>** Roger is seven today and Mother has found about ½lb of *icing sugar* in the back of the cupboard! Lovely. We shall take the cake to him on Sunday. There has been a consignment of oranges in Worthing! I got two = 1lb = 9d. We've not had any for eight months.

**August 10<sup>th</sup>** Mother and I and Kit drove up to Mollie's to celebrate Roger's seventh birthday. We had a lovely dinner of duck and green peas! Called in at the Mills' on the way back for coffee. Gladys is home – she's a State Registered nurse in the Navy and has been on a troopship taking men and munitions to the Middle East. Coming back she helped bring evacuees from Syria, Greece and Malta – all sorts of nationalities. The boat also brought a cargo of oranges and she was allowed a crate! She gave us twelve – six are for the sale next Thursday

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– we retaliated and gave her three eggs! Mollie had given us twelve to bring back  
– everyone is resorting to the old fashioned system of bartering.

**August 21<sup>st</sup>** Dorothy went blackberrying today and brought back 6lb of good fruit. Prices of wild blackberries, which are plentiful, will be controlled from Friday at 5½d a pound retail and 4d wholesale. Pickers will be paid £28 per ton. The Daily Telegraph reports that school children are to be encouraged to gather the wild fruit and housewives will be asked by the Ministry of Food to make the fullest use of them. Reservations with retailers for the season's supply of onions – 2lb a head – must be made during the weeks September 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>. Those failing to register with their greengrocer will not get any. Laval, the Vichy France politician is reported to have been shot and badly wounded along with several other 'Quislings'.

**September 21<sup>st</sup>** Mother and I to tea at Hilda's – wartime teas are very plain now. Yesterday no butter at all at the Moores' and today no cake at Hilda's!

**October 13<sup>th</sup>** I've taken on my new allotment today! As I drove past Walton's fruit shop lo and behold a pile of oranges! I enquired if they were for sale for children only and they were, for children under six, so I cycled up to Ken's after tea and told him he could get some for John and Richard as long as he took the children's ration books. The fruit shops look very nice now – plenty of apples at 9d a lb, Cox's Orange pippins are 1/3d a lb – all controlled prices. Our RAF made its most extensive raid on Germany last night – over 300 bombers being used. Targets as far south as Nuremberg were attacked.

**November 12<sup>th</sup>** Mother finds it difficult thinking out meals – our meat ration is still ½d worth each per week (we're sure we had horse meat last week!) and it's difficult to get any offal. We did have half a calf's head last week which made some excellent brawn. Milk is rationed now and we get one pint a day. Sugar is 6oz a week, butter 2oz and margarine 4oz, cheese 4oz and 3 eggs a *month*! It's very difficult thinking out puddings and having visitors to meals. Other things which are difficult are all things to do with hairdressing – setting lotion, hair nets, hair pins, Kirby grips, permanent waving appurtenances etc. Tinned fish and meats will be obtainable next week when the 'points' rationing comes into force. Dog meat is very erratic – Mike goes off every day somewhere (probably to the soldiers' billets) and comes back licking his chops! Jewellers are finding stock difficult, so are ironmongers. There is a great shortage of paper. We are urged to use as little fuel as possible. Chocolates and sweets are scarce but tobacco is more plentiful.

**November 16<sup>th</sup>** I took the car to forage for some cakes in West Worthing as Mrs Frampton had exhausted the East Worthing shops. Mother had a lovely Christmas parcel from Canada today – tinned cheese, butter, fruit juice, Callard and Bowser's fruit drops and tea. Ken and Helen to tea – they have given up a maid and find a little respite very pleasant occasionally! They've also given up telephone and smoking! Their boys, John and Richard, are very amusing – they don't like me to let the car's engine tick over as it's 'wasting petrol'!

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>** Today the milk rationing came into force – each adult will get two pints per week. Now if there are tea parties, visitors will be asked to bring their milk as well as their saccharine! Not to mention their butter.

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**November 27<sup>th</sup>** Terrific battles are being fought in Libya with big tank losses on both sides. Moscow is being threatened severely again, bloodshed and more bloodshed is the order of the day. The cut in our milk ration assumes paltry dimensions when viewed in the light of the sacrifices being made on the two chief battlefields.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>** We've had a really lovely Christmas. Food was good thanks to the Canadian and Australian parcels and my allotment! 4lbs of Brussels sprouts from it.

### 1942

February 18<sup>th</sup> I had a Canadian Soldier as a patient today and he gave me three lemons! We gave away one and swapped another for an orange and Mother made 2lb of marmalade! The Dutch are putting up a magnificent fight in their Far East possessions.

**March 9<sup>th</sup>** 'Black Market' offenders are to be very harshly punished and a good job too. Basic petrol ration is to disappear from July onwards. That will mean no private cars will be on the road after that date – and quite right too. No white bread will be made after April 6<sup>th</sup>, but the government wholemeal is excellent.

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>** There are very few private cars on the road now and people have cancelled their licences as the 'basic' ration of petrol has been so drastically cut. I get two gallons of basic until the end of July and then none. I do get 'supplementary' but that has been reduced too.

**March 28<sup>th</sup>** I saw in a fish shop this morning a board saying '3pm fresh herrings. Bring your own paper'. Often one sees 'Sorry – no sweets or cigarettes', 'Sorry – no onions, no oranges, no saccharines'. Other things which are very scarce are cosmetics, especially face powder, hair nets and pins, camera films, etc. Newspapers are very reduced in size.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>** After an early breakfast I set forth to queue up for fruit – gooseberries and strawberries if possible! I managed a lb of cherries at 1/6d a pound. Fruit is very difficult to come by but our loganberries are ready for the weekend and we'll pick peas too.

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>** Everyone is talking of food this Christmas. Mother was lucky in swapping with Miss Duncan ½ lb of suet plus two preserved eggs for 1lb of currants. Now she can make some mincemeat and Miss Duncan can make a Christmas Pudding!

### 1943

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** Eric Davis came for the weekend – his last probably as he is now an officer and will be posted somewhere soon. He looks very different now that he's in decent uniform. I got his weekend rations just before the shops shut (still 5.30pm): 2oz tea, 1 oz lard (3/4d!), 1oz butter, 2oz marg, 2oz rashers and 2oz sugar. It's a great help to have them; we especially wanted the bacon as there were no sausages in the town today.

**July 8<sup>th</sup>** We've been warned about further reductions in clothes coupons. Everyone has to be awfully careful with their old ones now. Mollie has sent an old silk dress today in the bag containing six eggs, along with socks and stockings

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that Mother mends weekly for her. Mol hopes Mother can remake the dress into a pair of pyjamas for Michael.

#### 1944

**February 25<sup>th</sup>** Ken and Helen have their third son! Simon was born a few hours after last night's raid, during which Helen and the boys were in the Morrison shelter. Lemons are on sale with no restrictions. To celebrate we had pancakes for supper! I did my usual monthly swap of three eggs for some lard with Mrs Playdon and so was able to fry them in lard.

**May 1<sup>st</sup>** Jock, our dog, ate our week's ration of cheese (2oz each a week!). Mollie sent us about 5lb of pork – part of the share out from Jack's National Fire Service Pig Club. It happens about twice a year.

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