

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 RATIONING

Remembering clothes rationing in Horsham

From *Memories from a town that disappeared, Horsham during World War II*
(Horsham Museum, 1989)

By Mrs S. Standing

Fashion always derived from films; as clothes were severely rationed, hair styles were copied and clothes altered....A great effort was made to appear smart, collars and cuffs could be bought coupon-free, changing the appearance of a plain sweater so it looked like a blouse underneath. Clothes were often trimmed with braid, such as ric-rac, since this was also coupon-free; dyed dresses (it only cost a penny) were a risk as they sometimes shrank. Wool for seamen's stockings was coupon-free, oily and coarse, but with some oddments of coloured wool a Fair Isle sweater could be made. Blouses could be made from coupon-free net, and worn with a pinafore dress, probably made from a cut-down dress. 'Stockings' were painted on legs, and a seam drawn with a special pencil - very messy and tended to come off on clothes. 'Wedge' shoes were the most desirable, and again were difficult to obtain owing to a shortage of leather, so they were very much cared for. As were clothes, which were carefully pressed and brushed....

Most girls wore very bright make-up, scarlet lipstick and pancake foundation, derived from films, although boot polish was used for mascara if that was not available. Hair grips and elastic were scarce, so were pounced on if the shops had any....Make-up was not always easy to obtain, so old lipstick stubs were saved and melted down together to make a new lipstick. Stockings, if you had any, were darned over and over again.

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