

War and peace

1900 to 1945

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Anderson shelter

Map of Exeter used by the Luftwaffe [6059]

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Opposite the case

Anderson shelter

1938-1945

From Woodville Road, St Thomas

Anderson shelters were specifically designed for families to build and use in their garden as a shelter from air raids. Each shelter was designed to protect six people.

Families often personalised them with bunk beds, a chamber pot, board games and posters.

Map of Exeter used by the Luftwaffe [6059]

About 1935-1936

Ordnance Survey

This map was overprinted by the German military to highlight key targets for Luftwaffe bombers in May 1942.

1 - Tail fin of an incendiary bomb

4 May 1942

Fell on 7 Lucas Avenue, Exeter

This fragment comes from an incendiary bomb, or firebomb, that destroyed a house in Mount Pleasant. It is a tiny reminder of a devastating bombing raid on Exeter. On this May night over 150 people died and hundreds more were injured. Some of the city's most famous landmarks, like Deller's Café and Bamfylde House, were destroyed.

2 - Silver plate mug

1930s-1940s

From Deller's Café, Exeter

When Deller's Café was destroyed during Exeter's Blitz this mug was rescued from the fire by Sidney and Em Holman. They had both worked at the café. Before the devastating fire, Deller's Café had been at the centre of Exeter social life, and even featured in a novel by Agatha Christie.

3 - St Mary Arches Church, Exeter, after the Blitz

Olive Wharry (1886-1947)

About 1942, watercolour on paper

This striking record of the Blitz shows a bomb-damaged church, and visible through its roof, the menacing shape of an aircraft flying above. The artist, Olive Wharry, had been a suffragette who was active in the Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.). Following her time with the W.S.P.U. she moved to Devon, where she remained until her death in 1947.

4 - War Damage to Exeter Cathedral

Dennis Flanders (1915-1994)

May 1942, watercolour on paper

The cathedral suffered a single direct hit during the Blitz of 1942, during which the chapels at the side of the south choir aisle were demolished. This painting shows the scene immediately afterwards.

5 - Bedford Circus after the Blitz

Albert Charles Bown (dates unknown)

About 1942, pencil and watercolour on paper

Bedford Circus was built in 1773. It was one of the most notable pieces of Georgian town planning in England. On 4 May 1942 this city landmark was caught in the Blitz. Although many buildings were gutted by fire, they were not completely destroyed. However, the decision was quickly made to pull down surviving walls and clear the entire area.

6 - *Housewife* magazine

January 1942

Published by the Hulton Press, the *Housewife* was a pocket magazine which ran to over 100 pages. For 9d (nine pence), readers were entertained and informed by articles on fashion, cookery, gardening and child care.

7 - *Housewife* magazine

May 1945

Even when the Allies were closing in on victory, many essential goods continued to be rationed. It was a time of hardship and poverty for many people in Britain. Magazines offered tips on how to 'make do and mend' and get the most from coupons.

8 - Gas mask instruction booklet

July 1939

The threat of a poisoned gas attack on civilians seemed a possibility in the early years of the Second World War. Anxious parents were issued with written instructions and given demonstrations on how to use a baby's gas mask. Despite the threat, many parents failed to practice using the mask as they feared suffocating their baby.

9 - Baby's gas mask

1939-1945

Made from rubberised cloth and metal

This baby's gas mask consists of an airtight chamber into which the infant could be strapped. Breathable air had to be pumped into the chamber by hand bellows, and relied on a conscious adult to operate it. Thankfully, the success of this design was never put to the test as the poisoned gas attacks never came.

10 - Scarf

1940s

Manufactured by Jacqmar

Silk with printed 'London Wall' design of patriotic wartime slogans. Silk scarves such as these were a relatively expensive, but colourful, way of adding style with a message to an outfit.

11 - Day dress

1947

Utility marked

In 1941, wartime shortages led to the formation of the Civilian Clothing Scheme. The aim was to ensure quality with efficient use of scarce materials. The Utility scheme was later extended to furniture and, due to post-war shortages, did not close until 1952. All products were clearly labelled or marked with a 'CC' logo.

12 - De-mob suit

About 1946

De-mob suits and coats were issued at the end of the Second World War to soldiers returning to civilian life. Quality varied, but some were well made of hard wearing woollen cloths and lasted for many years.

13 - 'Pork pie' trilby hat

Around 1945

This soft felt hat completed the de-mob suit. Lighter, more comfortable felt hats first became popular during the 1920s and 1930s. These soon replaced the bowler hat for the average man.

14 - Shoes

1940s

Utility marked

Black crepe and leather with buckled bar. These shoes, like the nearby dress of 1947, were issued under the wartime Civilian Clothing Scheme.

15 - A.R.P. warden's cap and jacket

Early 1940s

Made from heavy wool serge, it was worn by the brother of the donor, Mrs W. Turner, during the air raids on Exeter in May 1942. During the Second World War, the A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) warden was responsible for the issuing of gas masks and domestic air-raid shelters, and for the upkeep of public shelters. The A.R.P. also helped rescue people after air raids and ensured that the blackout was maintained.

16 - Dance or evening shoes

1925-1930

Designed by André Perugia, Paris

Black silk satin uppers with leather trim, diamanté fringe on T-bar fastening and diamanté studded heels. Perugia was one of the most glamorous footwear designers of the decade.

17 - Court shoes

Late 1920s or early 1930s

Designed for Frank Brothers, New York

Leather soles with metal thread brocade uppers.

18 - Evening bag

About 1920

Made in Britain or France

Satin, applied loom-woven steel and glass beads. 'Dorothy' bag style with braid drawstring.

19 - Evening bag

1920s

Made in France

Loom-woven gold-coloured beads with diamanté. Beaded fringe and beaded drawstring.

Paris was the centre of the trade in luxury fashion items, and had many bead workshops.

20 - Evening dress

About 1920

Silk georgette embellished with glass and wooden beads, and embroidery in the 'barbaric' style.

Towards the end of the First World War, folk or 'peasant' embroideries inspired colourful, exotic decoration on dress. Russian émigrés, fleeing the new regime after the revolution in 1917, came to France and England. Their plight boosted interest in Russian art and crafts.

21 - De-mobilisation order

Women's Royal Naval Service

19 February 1919

The W.R.N.S., known as the 'Wrens', was established in 1917 to assist with the war effort. Wrens worked in place of men as electricians and telegraphists as well as undertaking traditional female chores like cleaning and cooking.

They were disbanded at the end of the war, only to be reinstated in the Second World War.

22 - Letter of thanks to sailors

11 November 1918

From King George V

After the end of the First World War, King George V issued a formal vote of thanks to the sailors of the Royal Navy and the merchant fleet for their work. This notice was printed at the Royal Naval Dockyard, Devonport, which was one of the most important naval bases in the country.

23 - Collar

1914-1918

Part of the uniform of the Women's Royal Naval Service

Worn by Rosamund Davey Harwood (née Lee) of Plymouth. Rosamund worked at the Devonport Naval Base, Plymouth, as a 'writer' having taken shorthand lessons at night school in preparation for service.

24 - Card tally and name plate

1914-1918

Part of the uniform of the Women's Royal Naval Service

Metal name plate for luggage punched out at machines on railway stations. Belonging to Rosamund Davey Harwood (née Lee) of Plymouth.

25 - Cap band

1914-1918

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Worn by Rosamund Davey Harwood (née Lee) of Plymouth.
Rosamund worked at the Devonport Naval Base, Plymouth.