

# Recycling during times of crisis

## The WW2 National Salvage Campaign

As a result of the persistent bombing of supply ships Britain had to become more self-sufficient quickly during World War 2.

In 1939 the National Salvage Campaign was launched by the Ministry of Supply. Rationing was used to reduce waste and the collecting of 'salvage', or as we would now call it 'recycling'



Recycling was seen as part of your patriotic duty, helping to turn 'useless' objects 'useful' weapons of war:



- Paper was made into cartridge wads, parts of mines and targets for range practice.
- Metals from old cans and saucepans were used to build ships, planes, tanks, bombs and gun parts. Scrap metal drives were big community events all over the country.
- Old meat bones were collected and boiled up to make glue for aircraft and glycerine for explosives and fertilizer.
- Linen and calico were turned into Admiralty charts and paper



The campaign focused on exhortation, encouraging housewives to sort their waste as salvage was seen as women's work.

In 1940 the Cogs scheme was launched, recruiting children to run local collection services and promote salvage messages in the home. Known as Cogs, because they represented a small but important component in a national machine, children would go door to door collecting scrap paper, filling push-carts and old prams with scrap. Participants could earn the red Junior Salvage Steward cog badge for their hard work (a bit like a Blue Peter badge).

Just as now during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to recognise that none of the work that was accomplished would have been possible without the cooperation of the general public. National Salvage Campaign demonstrated how society can work together to achieve something extraordinary.

Help with recycling today [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/recycling)



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