



CHILTERN
OPEN AIR
MUSEUM

*Where buildings come
alive through history*

Make Do and Mend



Location:

- Northolt Barn

Practical Notes:

- During the Make Do and Mend workshop the children will be split into smaller groups and will be using tools, including cable pins and hammers. We therefore ask that all adult helpers are actively involved in this workshop.
- There are photo opportunities throughout these activities.

Purpose and content of the activity session:

- During this session the children will be able to explore rationing during and immediately after World War 2, with particular reference to the lives of children.
- The Museum teacher will help the children to explore the themes of recycling and creativity through making their own “make do and mend” toys to take home.

The explanation will vary in emphasis having regard to the age, ability and current or recent schoolwork (e.g. what was it like for children in the Second World War?) or interest if known beforehand.

Access Statement:

Northolt Barn: Fully Accessible to all users.

Make do and mend: The activities undertaken in this workshop require good hand-eye co-ordination skills, but can be undertaken by all children when a suitable level of support is provided by school staff and helpers.

Historical Background

Rationing:

During the war, and for a considerable time afterwards, a lot of different items were rationed, not just food. This was because there was not enough for everyone to have just what they wanted and our fighting forces needed some items more than the Home Front, for example cloth for uniforms and blankets, petrol for armoured vehicles, etc.

Clothes:

On 1st June 1941, every individual was allocated 66 clothing coupons for the year (equal to one complete outfit per year) and in 1942 the government, to limit the amount of materials used in making clothes, introduced a 'utility' scheme.

The list below shows the number of coupons needed to buy certain garments:

- Woman's nightdress = 6 coupons.
- Mans overcoat = 16 coupons
- Dress = 11 coupons
- *Underpants = 4 coupons*
- Handkerchief = ½ coupon
- Pyjamas = 8 coupons.

With these clothing restrictions, women were encouraged to repair old family clothes or 'recycle' old clothing by, for example, unravelling the wool of old or outgrown jumpers and knitting it into something else.

Campaigns like 'Make Do and Mend' did much to bolster inventiveness, often sparking off ideas of how to create new clothing using old materials. It wasn't unheard of for unwanted curtains to be made into skirts or dresses.



Furniture and other household items

Furniture was available only on coupons because of the rationing of materials, and 'utility' furniture was designed to use as little wood and other raw materials as possible. It was made available, however, to newly weds and civilians who had lost everything as a direct result of air raid bombings.

Materials used in the production of plates, saucepans and umbrellas were also tightly controlled – as an example, cups were often white and had no handles.



Sundry Items:

Petrol

The average working man couldn't afford a car but shortages of petrol meant fewer vehicles on the road and a greater reliability on public transport, which in itself was also restricted.

Farmers had special allowances for their tractors to help with the harvest, which was vital for food production.

Soap

Soap was in short supply and consequently rationed. Make up was difficult to find and therefore presents from friends abroad were very much appreciated.

Rationing of food and other items continued for 14 years (1939 until 1953), with strict control of items even after the war had ended.

Toys and Games

During the 1940s, lots of children would have lived in relative poverty, with rationing of most items in force and it was normal to inherit hand-me-downs. Television sets did not enter most homes until the late 1950s (many people of that era can remember several families crowding around one neighbour's

television set to watch Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation). With family income needed for rent, food and clothes there was little to spare for frivolities such as toys. Many toy companies actually stopped producing toys and games during the war to use their factories and workforce for more important war work. Most children would have had perhaps a dozen toys by the time that they left school (before 1947 that would have been at 14 years old). However, many parents made toys at home for their children, and in fact many children made their own toys.

Children were expected to amuse themselves rather than be amused and would do model making, painting and crayoning, needlework and other hobbies such as stamp collecting whilst listening to the wireless. Unlike today, children were encouraged to learn how to use tools, for example a penknife to 'whittle' a wooden object. They would have learned crafts that would help them in their adult lives; girls would learn crotchet and knitting while boys would learn carpentry and gardening. They would have made some toys themselves out of scrap materials, for example kites, sledges, trucks and cricket bats and stumps.

Various games were available that we are familiar with today such as Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Snap and Ludo; however there are very few toys and games in the prefab. The following can be found in the Museum's prefab: a 'Push' horse, Dominoes, Playing cards, 'Utility' crayons, 'Kan-U-Go', Pitt, Dolls, a Monkey, a Toy gun, Meccano and a tennis racket. The dolls in the cot, in the main bedroom, are made of rubber, not plastic, and the other two wooden dolls were sold cheaply to dress yourself.

Many games could be played in the house and outside in the garden, for example 'Oranges and Lemons', skipping, leap frog, hopscotch, marbles, paper and pencil games and card games. Nursery rhymes, songs and singing games have been played in fields and playgrounds for centuries, many being based on historical events. For example 'Ring-o-Roses' is said to represent the symptoms of the bubonic plague and 'The Grand Old Duke of York' recalls a famous battle in the late 1700s when a regiment of redcoats were marched to their deaths. You may like to discover the different histories behind rhymes that today's children know. Variations can be found all over the country and through different generations.

The following are games that might have been played in the prefab garden.

Pop goes the Weasel

Up and down the city road,
In and out The Eagle,
That's the way the money goes,
Pop goes the weasel.

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle,

Mix it up and make it nice,
Pop goes the weasel.

Stand in two rows facing each other. Move forward towards each other while singing the first line. Move backwards away from each other while singing the second line. During the third line, the top couple choose a partner from the other side then everyone chooses. Everyone swings his or her partner on the last line. Repeat.

Ring-o-Roses

Ring, a-ring o' roses,
A pocketful of posies,
Atishoo, atishoo,
We all fall down.

Form a circle holding hands. Gallop to the left while singing the first line. Gallop to the right while singing the second line. Stand still for the third line and raise your hands for each 'atishoo'. Everyone falls on the floor for the last line.

Oranges and Lemons

Oranges and lemons
Say the bells of St. Clements
I owe you five farthings
Say the bells of St. Martins
When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells of Shoreditch
When will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney

I'm sure I don't know
Says the Great Bell of Bow
Here comes the candle to light you to bed
Here comes the chopper to chop off your head
Chop, chop, chop, chop, last man dead.

Two of the tallest people in the group form an arch with their raised arms. The others form a line and go through the arch singing the song. When it comes to the last chop, the couple forming the arch capture one of the others in their arms. That person then chooses which one of the two forming the arch to stand behind. Start again, and keep repeating until everyone is standing behind one of the arch people. The two parties then form a 'tug of war' until one of the sides breaks off.