

# **Life on the Home Front During the Second World War 1939 – 1945**



**Manx National Heritage Education Services**

# **Life on the Home Front during the Second World War**

## **1939 - 1945**

### **Teacher's Notes**

This education pack accompanies Manx National Heritage's Museum on the Move WW2 loan box. The loan box contains genuine artefacts together with reproduction objects and study information.

Whilst it is not currently possible to borrow the loan box, we hope the teacher's notes together with photographs of the objects will be useful. The pack has been designed to help you examine with your students how the Second World War impacted Island life, with an emphasis on home front stories.

The box covers three main study areas:

### **A) The Impact of War on Island Life**

### **B) The Island Does Its Bit**

### **C) Civilian Internment**

The Manx newspapers contain a great deal of information about what life was like on the Island during the war years. The newspapers are digitally available and currently free to access.

Please visit <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/> to find out more.

## A) The Impact of War on Island Life

When war was declared on 3 September 1939 there was a sense of inevitability about the conflict. The warning signs had been apparent to anyone who cared to look. In the summer of 1939, the Island's famous TT motorcycle races were dominated by the German national team flying swastikas keen to secure a propaganda victory for Hitler and the Nazi party.

On 24 August 1939 the Island's only Territorial Army formation, the 15<sup>th</sup> (Isle of Man) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment R.A., was mobilised for permanent service. At the same time construction of a new airfield at Jurby was also nearing completion. RAF Jurby opened within weeks of the outbreak of war.

On the outbreak of war the Royal Navy requisitioned some of the Isle of Man Steam Packet fleet. Most of their crew were replaced by Royal Navy personnel, with the exception of engineering staff who were retained because of their familiarity with the ships engines.

With the coming of autumn, blackout restrictions were imposed and as Christmas approached it was with a sense of pride that a fund had been established through which to send a present to every Manx serviceman who was away from home at that time.

### Food Rationing

Due to a combination of labour shortages and naval blockades there were food shortages across the British Isles. To combat this issue rationing was introduced by the Ministry of War as a way to protect food supplies. Rationing cards were issued so that every person would have the same amount of basic food as everyone else.

When it came to rationing on the Isle of Man, the Manx people thought they should follow Britain's example (although rationing was never as strongly needed on the Island). The week before rationing was officially brought in a guide on how to use ration books was printed in the *Ramsey Courier*. Restrictions, rules and even some laws about food were also brought in. The

Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>

Manx newspapers tell a story about two Douglas bakers who were given hefty fines for selling cake with chocolate on the top and cream in the middle. It was illegal to have chocolate topping AND cream in the middle. It had to be either or.

## **Farming & Dig for Victory**

Farming was crucial to the war effort. Restrictions were brought in to ensure that the food farmers produced was evenly distributed across the Island. One of these restrictions was that half of all the meat a farmer produced had to go to people in the community. Many farmers were fined for keeping more meat for their families.

People were also encouraged to farm food themselves. The idea of 'Dig for Victory' was introduced throughout Britain to encourage people to turn their private gardens into mini allotments. People were inspired to fill their gardens with vegetables, fruit and wheat.

Many Manx farmers struggled with labour shortages during the war. A local farmer was fined for failing to turn up regularly to Home Guard practice. His mother came to his defence in Court, stating her son couldn't be expected to go to practice because he was working 14 hours a day on his 86 acre farm by himself. The Manx Women's Land Army and internee labour did much to help with the labour shortage.

## **Air Raid Precautions & Bombings**

Air raid precaution exercises were held on the island throughout the war. Civilians were told to let passers-by into their shelters/homes in a blackout or if an air raid had started. Most people had an air raid shelter in or near to their homes. Sand was distributed to all homeowners in case of an air raid or the dropping of incendiary bombs.

Whilst the Isle of Man was not a deliberate target for air raids, it was used as a 'signpost' in the Irish Sea for German bombers heading to Liverpool, Manchester or Belfast. Strict adherence to the blackout was therefore very important. Occasionally bombs were dropped on the Island, mostly by damaged German

aircraft trying to lighten their loads. In 1940 a German incendiary bomb was dropped over the South of the Island near Cregneash. The next day a small frog was found burned to death lying in the heather. It was taken to the Manx Museum and put on display, with a sign stating 'First Victim of the Luftwaffe'. The newspapers made a joke that whilst Manx people were not afraid of the Germans, frogs all over the Island were now terrified. It is a nice example of a piece of Manx propaganda.



**The Famous Manx 'Luftwaffe' Frog, now in Manx National Heritage's Collections**

## **Fundraising & Charity**

As with the First World War, Manx women rallied together to raise funds and knit supplies for soldiers! Women like Mrs Rose Farrant, wife of Deemster Farrant, were a powerhouse of efficiency and motivation. She launched the Red Cross 'Penny a Week Fund', which was enormously effective and accessible to even those who had very limited means. The simplicity of the message to save just one penny a week was hugely popular.

When the Isle of Man Times launched a campaign to raise £5,000 to buy a Spitfire, she ensured that even the smallest contributions were acknowledged in

Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>



the newspaper and the donors properly thanked. The Isle of Man Times was astounded to discover in just three weeks they had raised over £10,000 – and the Island purchased two Spitfires to fight in the Battle of Britain. The Manx Spitfires were a source of great pride to the Isle of Man.

Many organisations hosted charity fundraising events. One such effort held in 1942 was a charity dance and tombola at the Villa Marina to raise funds for the Prisoner of War Fund, the Women's Guild and the King George Fund for Sailors. The charity dance was held at the Villa Marina Ballroom and raised almost £800. These events did much to boost morale, and with so many armed service personnel stationed on the island it was also an opportunity for romances to blossom.

### **Childhood during the Second World War**

As was to be expected, life wasn't easy for Manx children during the Second World War. Most had family members fighting away and others had to help out at home with tasks usually left to the adults. A number of children moved to the Island, because they were evacuated from their city homes and others arrived to live with their mothers at the Rushen Internment Camp.

School children had to take part in regular air raid precaution drills and had to carry their gas masks with them at all times.

Despite the war mischievous children still found ways to have fun! The newspaper details the exploits of two young Douglas boys who forced the padlock off the Home Guard magazine at St John's and stole various explosives and ammunition. They then performed a similar stunt at the Home Guard in Union Mills, and later in the Onchan Home Guard Armoury. The boys also wrote rude messages opposite a high school for girls and painted a rude image on a garage door!

## The Impact of War on Island Life: Objects

### Air Raid Wardens Steel Helmet, Whistle and Lamp (1937)

Before the Second World War British people feared that any future war would involve heavy aerial bombing of civilian areas. In December 1937, the British government passed the Air Raid Precautions (or 'ARP') Act, requiring local authorities to ready themselves in case of air attack. A similar Act was passed on the Isle of Man. One of the most visible forms of 'ARP' was the air raid warden. The wardens had a range of duties, such as advising local people on air raid precautions and enforcing the night time 'blackout' to ensure no artificial lights were visible from the air. During a raid, wardens were responsible for monitoring and reporting bomb damage, and for helping to coordinate the response of other civil defence services.

Air raid wardens were issued with steel helmets. These helmets were similar to the steel helmets issued to soldiers in the First World War and protected the wearer from falling shrapnel or debris. Steel helmets were also issued to firefighters, police officers and other members of civil defence services, and soon became a recognisable symbol of authority. The same helmet was worn by members of the Manx Home Guard.



Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>

## Air Raid Rattle

This is a gas rattle. It is a hand-held noisemaking device used to give warning of a gas attack or during gas mask drill. By holding the handle and spinning the rattle around it, the rattle makes a distinctive clicking noise. The 'all clear' signal would be given by ringing a hand bell.



## Shell Dressing

Issued by the Air Rad Precautions Department and carried by ARP wardens.





## Civilian Pattern Respirator (Gas Mask)

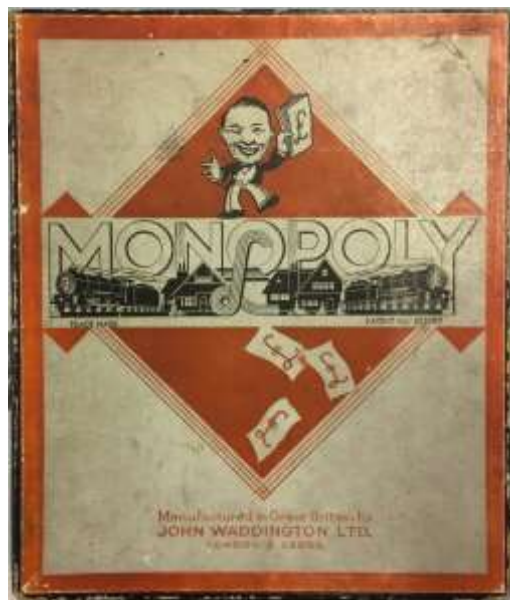
From 1938, in response to fears that air attacks on Britain might include the use of poison gas, the entire British population was issued with gas masks. Most people received this standard civilian pattern respirator. Although poison gas was never used against Britain during the Second World War, masks like this became another common symbol of wartime life. Though masks were potentially lifesaving pieces of equipment, they tended to make their wearers appear terrifyingly alien and dehumanised.



## Wartime Monopoly (1940)

This is an unusual wartime edition of the popular game Monopoly. The game length has also been shortened. It contains a note from the manufacturers stating:

*'We regret that it has been necessary to make alterations to the component parts used in "Monopoly". The trinkets have been replaced by wooden pieces. A spinner is substituted for the dice and other alterations made. We have, however, turned out the best possible game under restrictive conditions, and we hope that you will obtain from the game the amusement and pleasure you did from your peace time "Monopoly".'*



## The Black Out Book

Many different air raid shelter games and activities were developed to help keep children occupied and to stop them feeling frightened. This book published in 1939 was written to provide family amusement and entertainment during the blackout. There are lots of fun activities in the book that you can play with your students.



## Food Ration Book (reproduction)

As the war progressed food supplies were running low. This was caused by labour shortages and naval blockades of supply ships. To combat this issue rationing was introduced by the Ministry of War as a way to protect food supplies. Rationing cards were given to people so that every person would have the same amount of basic food as everyone else.



## Clothing Ration Book & Make Do & Mend Enamel Sign

It wasn't just food that was rationed during the Second World War. Clothing also became scarce as there was a shortage of materials. Clothes rationing began in 1941 and ended in 1949. People were also urged to 'Make Do and Mend' so that clothing factories and workers could be used to make wartime items. This ration book was issued to Ada Margaret Cowley of 9 Hope Terrace, Douglas in 1943.



## The Stork Wartime Cookery Book & Miller's Wartime Recipe Book

Wartime food shortages included meat, dairy and tinned foods. The Ministry of War had a team of people creating new recipes to help people make the most of the limited foods. These recipes used ingredients that were available, like lentils or potatoes, and made dishes out of them that originally contained ingredients that were harder to find at the time. They were called 'mock' recipes. Product manufacturers, in this case Stork margarine and Miller's baking powder produced their own wartime recipe books.



Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>

## Dried Egg

Dried egg powder was the response of the government to a wartime shortage of fresh eggs. Dried egg powder became available in 1942 (fresh eggs were rationed in June 1942) and it was used to supplement the egg allowance whilst rationing was in place. Dried egg powder came from America. A tin of it contained the equivalent of a dozen eggs. There was never a shortage of eggs on the Isle of Man during the Second World War, and military personnel stationed on the Island would often 'smuggle' eggs over to England!



## National Dried Milk

Fresh, fluid milk was limited, so the Ministry of Food created two different types of powdered milk. One was 'Household Milk', dried skimmed milk for general consumption. The second was National Dried Milk, a dried 'full cream' milk powder aimed at feeding infants. As with eggs, milk was never really in short supply on the Island – but Manx people felt they ought to support the rationing philosophy.



## B) The Island 'Does Its Bit'

Conscription became a requirement on the Isle of Man from late 1939. All men aged between 18 and 41 had to register for military service at Ramsey, Peel, Castletown and Douglas. Those medically unfit were exempted, as were others in key industries and jobs such as baking, farming, medicine, and engineering. Conscientious objectors had to appear before a tribunal to argue their reasons for refusing to join-up. If their cases were not dismissed, they were granted one of several categories of exemption, and were given non-combatant jobs.

One big difference between the First World War and the Second World War was the role played by women. For the first time conscription applied to women as well. All unmarried or childless widowed women aged 20-30 were required to serve in the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force or to undertake national service.

**Women's Royal Naval Service:** The women's branch of the Royal Navy. WRENs included cooks, clerks, wireless telegraphers, radar plotters, electricians, and air mechanics.

**The Auxiliary Territorial Service:** The role of the ATS focused on non-combatant jobs, such as motor driving and clerical services.

**The Women's Auxiliary Air Force:** The women's branch of the Royal Air Force. Women took up roles as mechanics, engineers, electricians, and fitters for aeroplanes. Whilst women were permitted to fly planes from one air field to another, the WAAF were not allowed to fly planes in combat.

Many women left the island to join the services or take up work of national importance on the mainland. There were lots of objections to women being sent off the island and Tynwald agreed that no woman should be liable to conscription unless she had been offered and refused work of national importance on the Island.



## The Manx Women's Land Army

On the outbreak of war in 1939 the Isle of Man was quick to train women for farm work. Advertisements were placed in newspapers to encourage young women to sign up for the newly formed Manx Women's Land Army. The new recruits were sent to Knockaloe Training Farm near Peel, where they underwent six weeks of training. They were tested on milking and dairy work, poultry care, tractor driving, and other aspects of farm life. Some women were placed on farms, whilst others became part of mobile squads who travelled the Island in small groups to wherever they were needed.



MWLA Recruitment Poster

For their uniform, the 'Manx Land Girls' were issued with three shirts, two pairs of dungarees, an oilskin or mackintosh, six pairs of stockings, a pair of shoes, and a hat. Unlike those working in England, the Manx women involved in the WLA

received no recognition for their efforts. It wasn't until November 2006 that the women received medals for their contribution to the war effort.



**The Manx Women's Land Army meeting King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, Tynwald Day 1945**



**Local women Marion Quayle, Joan Quayle & Marion Moyer in their MWLA uniform c. 1940**

## The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company

On the outbreak of war the Royal Navy requisitioned ten of the Isle of Man Steam Packet fleet. Three ships, *King Orry*, *Mona's Isle* and *Manx Maid*, left to be converted into armed boarding vessels. Other ships had been called up as troop carriers in support of the British Expeditionary Force in France. Several ships remained on the Isle of Man to maintain services to and from the island. The Steam Packet was put on alert and in the event of an emergency the Admiralty would need all its ships and crews at once.

## Dunkirk

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Ships played an important role in the evacuation of Dunkirk. Indeed it is estimated that 1 in 14 men rescued from Dunkirk were rescued by a Steam Packet Ship, some 25,000 men. It has been described as the Island's biggest contribution to the war effort. Three Manx ships were lost at Dunkirk. The most notable being the loss of Manx steamer *Mona's Queen* with twenty-four members of her crew drowned. *Fenella* and *King Orry* (a veteran of the First World War) were the other two ships lost.

The *Mona's Queen* was one of the first to make a successful round trip during the evacuation. On 29 May 1940, the ship sailed back to Dunkirk with water canisters for troops, but unfortunately hit a sea mine outside of Dunkirk harbour and sank. Tynwald paid a tribute in memory of the Manx men who had died in the rescue attempt at Dunkirk.

Many Manx men were rescued from Dunkirk. One survivor, Private Fred Watterson, was on the beach at Dunkirk for five days, where troops were under constant shellfire. Eventually, he was able to return home to the Island in June 1940. Douglas man Captain John Henry Whiteway was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for good services in the withdrawal from the beaches at Dunkirk. Allan Watterson also received the award, whilst Thomas Gribbin was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.





## Isle of Man Home Guard

In May 1940 an unpaid Local Defence Volunteer Force was established for the defence of the British Isles. In the first week 1,500 men had enlisted on the Isle of Man. The LDV was renamed by Winston Churchill as the Home Guard (and affectionately known as Dad's Army). All the volunteers were aged between 17 and 65, and were expected to be of reasonable fitness.

The primary role of the Home Guard was to co-operate with the regular troops to protect against enemy invasion. It was expected that the enemy would drop small groups of spies in parts of the countryside for the purpose of disrupting communications.



**Private Reginald Farrant, Manx Home Guard, 1940**

Prominent Manxman and Deemster of the Isle of Man, Reginald Farrant, became the first recruit in the newly formed Manx Home Guard. He was asked to sign up

Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>



by Lieutenant Colonel Scott, the first commanding officer of the Manx Home Guard. Note the First World War issue gasmask worn around his neck and steel helmet.



**Private Peter Farrant, 1940**

Peter Farrant, son of Deemster Farrant, was attached to the Manx Home Guard during the school holidays. He went on to serve in the 2nd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment.

## **Military Training Bases on the Isle of Man**

Between 1939 and 1945, thousands of military personnel came to the island to train and bases were set up all over the Isle of Man. These included:

**HMS Valkyrie:** a naval radar operating training school on Douglas Head and in boarding houses along the Promenade. It provided courses to both male and female radar mechanics.

**RAF Jurby:** an airfield based in the North of the Island that was used for training. During the Second World War, it was used as No. 5 Armament Training Station, No. 5 Air Observer School, No. 5 Bombing and Gunnery School, and as the Air Navigation and Bombing school. It was also used as an airfield in the summer of 1941. After WW2, it became the RAF Officer Cadet Training Unit. RAF Jurby finally closed in 1963.

**RAF Andreas:** an airfield opened in 1941 as a fighter command airfield. It later became 11 Air Gunnery School of Training Command in 1943.

**HMS St. George:** a shore based training school for boys (aged 15-16) by the Royal Navy in September 1939. Recruits were housed at a requisitioned holiday camp at Little Switzerland, formally known as Cunningham's Camp. Classes were held at the newly built Ballakermeen High School and lessons were given in such subjects as mathematics, magnetism, electricity, navigation, further electricity, naval history and English.



**HMS St George, Tynwald Day 1941**

## The Island 'Does Its Bit': Objects

### Women's Land Army Uniform (reproduction)

Such was the pressure on clothing resources that it took many months, sometimes even years, for members of the land army to receive their official uniforms. Members of the Manx Women's Land Army used to borrow their father's clothes, tightening the baggy trousers with a belt.



## Home Guard Uniform (reproduction)

Uniform as issued to all Home Guard Units. The steel helmet in the box was worn by both ARP wardens and Home Guard soldiers.



## **William Sutherland's Military Satchel**

This military satchel and its contents were donated to Manx National Heritage after it was found under the floor boards of a former boarding house in Douglas. We do not know much about William Sutherland but we know he moved here from Glasgow during the war years and remained here until his death in 1968. It is probable that he came here on official war work – perhaps as a guard at one of the internment camps.

**National Service Registration card:** The National Service (Armed Forces) Act imposed conscription on all males aged between 18 and 41 who had to register for service. This is William Sutherland's registration card.

**National Registration Identity Card** - during the war years every man, woman and child had to carry an identity card at all times. Identification was necessary if families got separated from one another or their house was bombed, and if people were injured or killed. The sections in the card showing the change in address were important, as many people moved several times during the war. On William's card we can see he moved from Glasgow to Douglas.

**Air Raid Precautions – Handbook No.1 Personal Protection Against Case:** This small book was originally issued by the Home Office in 1936, and reissued on the outbreak of war. It contains information on what to do during an air raid and how to correctly fit a gas mask.

**Civil Defence No. 1 & No.2:** Two helpful public information pamphlets issued by the Civil Defence in July 1939, advising people what to do if a war should come.

**Spot Them in the Air:** A guide to aircraft distributed by the Daily Mail. The guide was to help British people identify friend from foe in the skies

**National Defence Pocket Book:** a combined pocket book and note book for all engaged on national defence, whether in Navy, Army, Air Force, The Home Guard or civilian services.





## C) Civilian Internment

At the outbreak of war, there were 75,000 people from Germany, Austria and Italy living in Britain. As the threat of enemy invasion grew in Britain, people worried that some of these 'enemy aliens' were acting on behalf of their home nation, and were potentially spies. In May 1940 the fear of enemy sabotage on home soil grew to the point that the British government decided to arrest many of these foreign born nationals so that their actions were restricted. This was called internment and included all 'enemy' nationality men and women aged between 16 and 60.

For the men and women who held the wrong citizenship or credentials in the spring of 1940 this meant an enforced stay of up to five years on the Isle of Man. Many internees, especially those who had fled to Britain to escape Nazi persecution, only spent a few months on the Island, being released by local tribunals if they were able to demonstrate their loyalty to Britain. Many went on to undertake war work.

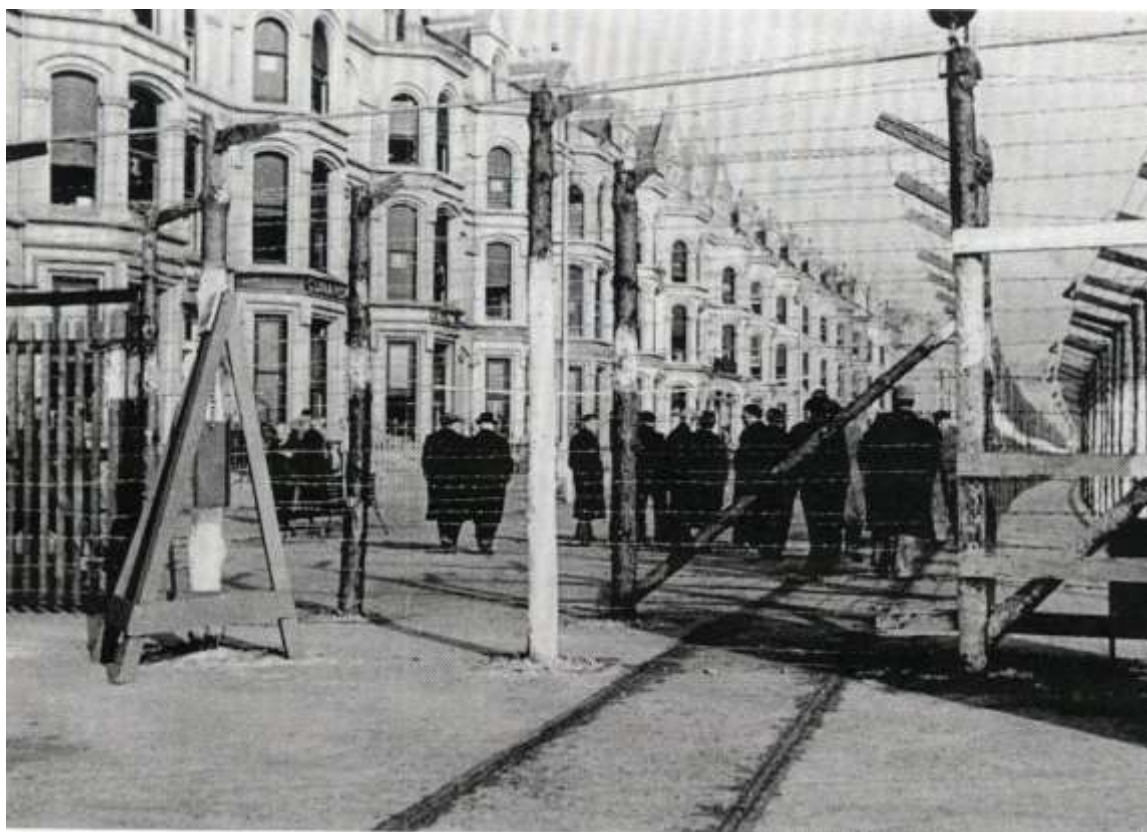
The internees came from a wide variety of backgrounds. There were many doctors, lawyers and teachers, but there were also lots of artists, such as influential artist Kurt Schwitters, musicians and even a lion tamer.

There were a number of internment camps throughout Britain, but the vast majority of internees were sent to the Isle of Man. The male camps were located in former boarding houses in Douglas, Ramsey, Onchan and Peel. The owners of the boarding houses were given one week's notice to leave before barbed wire was put up and the internees arrived.

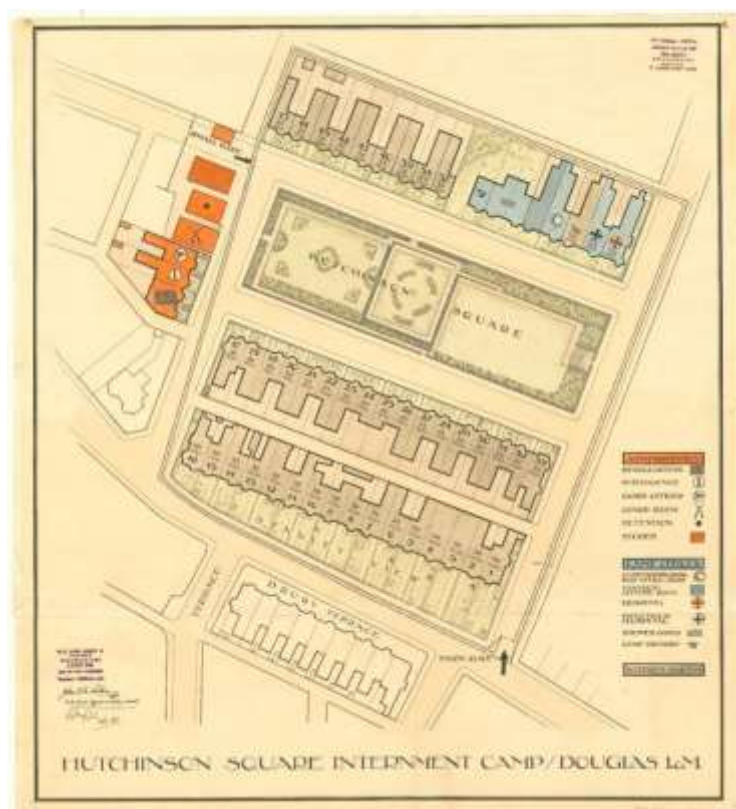
The female internees were sent to Rushen Camp, and eventually a married camp was established behind barbed wire at Port St Mary.

For more information about the different camps and what life was like for the internees please see Manx National Heritage's book *Living with the Wire*, included in this box.

Discover more at <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/>



**Granville Internment Camp, Douglas Promenade**



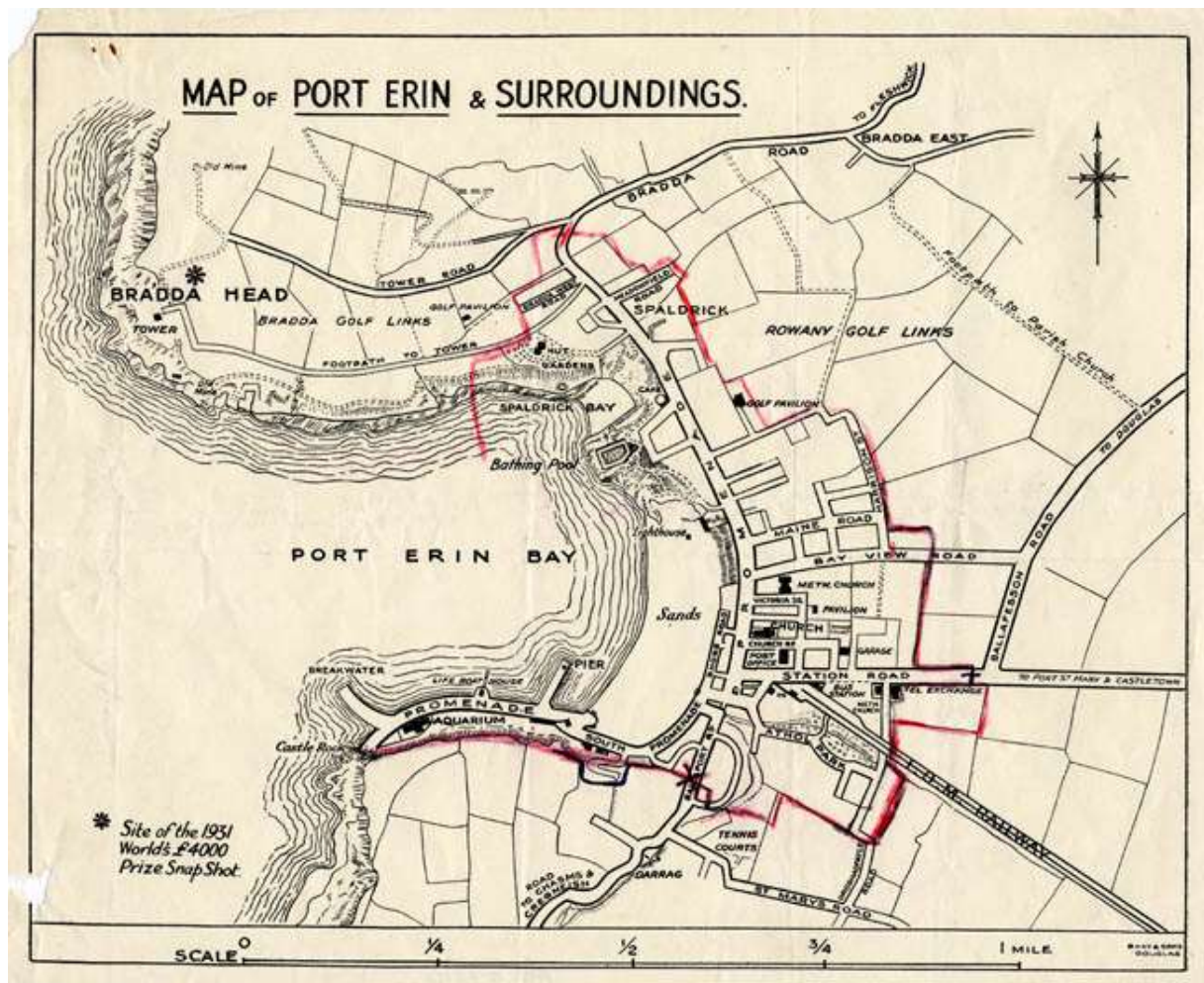
**Plan of Hutchinson Square Internment Camp, Douglas**



## Rushen Camp

In May 1940 3,025 women with 300 children arrived on the Island to be billeted in the hotels and boarding houses of Port Erin and Port St Mary.

Rushen Camp was the collective name for the fenced off areas where, by the end of the war more than 5,800 women and children had been interned in either the women's or married camp areas. Although children were not interned, children under 16 were permitted to stay with their mothers in the Rushen Camp.



Rushen Camp showing barbed wire

Many local people suddenly found themselves living behind barbed wire themselves in both Port Erin and Port St Mary. They had to show their

registration documents to the guards whenever they wanted to leave the town. Some people felt they were as much imprisoned as the internees.

*What is the barbed wire doing  
Set up everywhere I see?  
Is it meant to keep the world out  
Or protect the world from me?*

*Certainly we both are nasty  
And we know it very well.  
Is the world worse or am I worse,  
That's the one thing I can't tell.*

*Until one of us gets better  
We will stay right where we are.  
World on one side, me on one side,  
Each of us quite pleased so far.*

**Livia Laurent**

**Second World War Internee**



**Children from Rushen Camp exercising on Port Erin Beach**



## C) Civilian Internment: Objects

### Internee String Bag (reproduction)

A unique aspect of the women's camp at Rushen was the Service Exchange. This was an exchange of skills where women could do what they were good at – sewing, weaving, hairdressing, knitting, toy making, dressmaking, legal advice, languages etc – and it was paid for in tokens. These tokens could then be exchanged to buy goods in the camp. Many craftwork items were produced in the camp under this scheme, with some being sold or given to local women. We have many such items in the national collections. This string purse is a reproduction of a similar purse in our collections.



## Internee Registration Card (reproduction)

All internees were issued with a registration card, containing their personal details and a photograph. This card belonged to German national Martha Probst. She began living in Britain in 1937, and was interned on the Isle of Man on 18 July 1940. She was released at a tribunal hearing on 16 December 1941 (see stamp on the card) and returned to London where she secured a job in a pie factory. During internment she met and became friends with Hugo Hecker, whom she later married.

FEMALE. 97778		REGISTRATION CARD.	
(1) NAME (Surname first in Roman capitals) <i>PROBST. Martha Maria Augusta.</i>		(3) IDENTITY BOOK OR REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE No <i>511892</i> Date <i>25 Oct. 43</i> Issued at <i>Slaugh.</i>	
ALIAS			
(2) NATIONALITY <i>German</i>	Born on <i>18 July 13</i>	in <i>Bonnem.</i>	
(4) PREVIOUS NATIONALITY (if any)			
(5) PROFESSION or OCCUPATION <i>Business.</i>		(6) Arrived in U.K. on <i>23 Oct. 40</i>	
(7) Address of last residence outside U.K. <i>Spaltenstrasse 28, Elbe-Harbour.</i>			
SINGLE or MARRIED <i>Single</i>	Husband's Name and Serial No.		
(8) GOVERNMENT SERVICE			(11) SIGNATURE OR LEFT THUMB PRINT. <i>Martha Probst</i> <i>RNJZ-384-3</i>
(9) PASSPORT or other papers as to nationality and identity. <i>German Pt. 3802</i> <i>London. 5. 4. 4.</i>			