

Marlow Summer 1918

By the summer of 1918, the effects of four years of war on living conditions in Marlow were beginning to be felt by local residents.

Rationing

As the War continued, a relentless German submarine campaign against supply ships raised concerns in Britain that there would not be sufficient supplies of food. Food Control Committees were set up across the country to ensure a sufficient supply of food at prices that people could afford. This resulted in the rationing of certain items. By the summer of 1918, Marlow residents were rationed concerning the amount of meat, bacon, sugar, butter, margarine, lard and tea that they could buy. Even so, the Food Control Committee was concerned that the price of bacon was too high 'for the poorer classes'.

Getting enough potatoes

In addition to rationing, the Government encouraged the growth of more food crops, in particular potatoes. Marlow Urban District Council led campaigns to get people to grow more and even planted potatoes in the cemetery. A real problem was potato blight which had to be prevented and treated by spraying the crop during the summer. The Council bought a number of sprayers for local people to use and put on demonstrations at Marlow Cottage Hospital.

Shading lights at home

The increasing number of air raids by German Zeppelin airships led to the introduction of regulations for homes to shade their lights at night. It also resulted in prosecutions for people who did not follow the regulations. In August 1918, Elsie Wetherman of Pheasants Hill, Hambleden was fined £1 for not shading her light and in September, Ada Marshall of Marlow was fined 10 shillings for the same offence.

The effect of labour shortages

By 1918, almost all of the able-bodied men in Marlow had either enlisted voluntarily or been conscripted into the Army. This resulted in a shortage of labour for

important local services. A lack of trained men meant that the local water company could not deal quickly with leakages and problems, resulting in an irregular supply of water to the town and frequent complaints from local people.



Alfred Davis, J.P., Chairman of the Marlow Food Control Committee



One of the Government's posters to encourage people not to waste food