

Records of the Home Front at Wirral Archives Service

The Second World War had a profound impact on the lives of those who remained at home. Many of the documents held by Wirral Archives Service created during the war contain information on the effects of war on daily life in Wirral.

This leaflet outlines some of the documents held by Wirral Archives Service which relate to the local response to the war, and offers guidance on researching the Wirral Home Front and the people who worked to protect it.



Wirral Archives Service

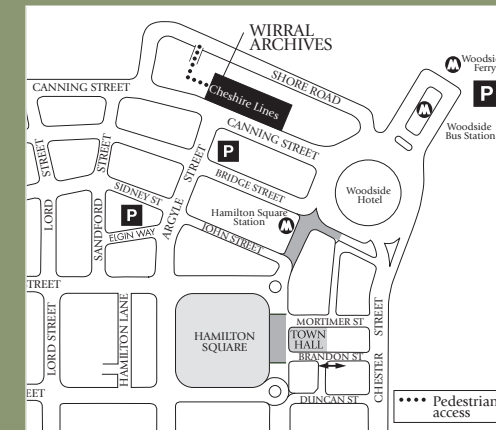
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Website: www.wirral.gov.uk
(please go to Leisure and Culture -> Records and Archives).

Opening hours

Monday - Friday, 9.30 - 16.30
Saturday, 10.00 - 13.00

Please note that access to the Service is via Shore Road.



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Records of the Home Front

A guide to records of the home front at Wirral Archives Service



Home Guard

The Home Guard was set up in May 1940 as a force of volunteers trained to assist in the defence of the country in the event of an invasion.

Wirral Archives Service holds records of Wallasey Women's Home Guard, and a history of the Cheshire Home Guard.

Air Raid Precautions (ARP)

The administration of air raid precautions by local authorities encompassed a huge range of operations: building shelters; enrolling personnel; training in civil defence skills; planning evacuation schemes; establishing warning systems; and responding to air raids through emergency feeding and rebuilding programmes.

Wartime measures were recorded in the minutes of local government committees, in particular ARP, Emergency and Civil Defence Committees. Wirral Archives Service also holds Town Clerk's Civil Defence files.

Food and Rationing

The rationing of food was introduced on 8 January 1940, following the issue of ration books. To help with the feeding of those living in bombed areas, the Ministry of Food set up 'British Restaurants', communal feeding centres where low-priced meals could be obtained, coupon-free.

Wirral Archives Service holds Communal Feeding Committee minutes, Town Clerk's Food Control files, and Emergency Feeding files.

Schools and Evacuation

By the end of 1938 evacuation schemes were in preparation for mothers with children under five years of age, unaccompanied school age children, expectant mothers, and the blind and disabled. 'Evacuable' areas included the more congested parts of Birkenhead and Wallasey.

Evacuation began in September 1939, and evacuees went to reception areas in North Wales, and also parts of Wirral deemed to be safe, such as Hoylake, West Kirby, and South Wirral.



Information on the evacuation schemes can be found in certain ARP committee minutes and Town Clerk's files, though individual names of pupils evacuated are not held. Wirral Archives Service also holds Education Committee minutes, Evacuation Welfare Committee minutes, and registers of the evacuees to Hoylake and West Kirby.

By November 1939 several schoolchildren had returned home and many schools had reopened. Head teachers' log books that survive from the period provide brief but vivid insights into school life during the Blitz (see the catalogue of school records).

Industry and Workers

The Cammell Laird collection contains specifications, estimates and photographs of warships built by the shipyard during the Second World War. (No personnel records survive.)

Military Hospitals

Wirral Archives Service holds wartime admission registers for Clatterbridge Military Hospital and Thornton Manor Military Hospital.

Records Held Elsewhere

Photographs of war damage in Birkenhead are held at Birkenhead Reference Library. The address is:

Birkenhead Reference Library
Borough Road, Birkenhead
Wirral CH41 2XB
Tel: 0151 652 6106 ext. 7
birkenhead.ref@wirral-library.net

Index cards (but not service records) for the Women's Land Army are held by The National Archives. The address is:

The National Archives
Kew
Richmond
Surrey TW9 4DU
Tel: 020 8876 3444
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Further Reading

Wallasey at War, 1939-1945,
Ian and Marilyn Boumphrey

Birkenhead at War, 1939-1945,
Ian and Marilyn Boumphrey

Wirral on the Home Front, 1939-1945,
Ian Boumphrey

Wirral at War,
Irby WEA local history class