

NEWSletter

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This month we feature the final part of Anne Silins three part investigation into the how WW2 blackout regulations affected Appleby.

Vehicle head lights, if possible, would have a small 'roof like half circle' piece of metal attached over the top of the headlight. Also half of that head light, the top portion had to be covered in dark coloured tape. All this to deflect the light downwards. Driving became more difficult because road and street signs were for the most part none existent. Traffic lights in towns and cities were either turned off or dimmed. Night time driving was not encouraged for the general population. The population was told that an invasion could happen! Towards the end of the war it was believed that if German soldiers did manage to get ashore, with no street signs, they would become lost and it was hoped that they would wander aimlessly until they were captured. Because of all these precautions during the 'blackout' people were hurt and some even died in road accidents. It wasn't until September 1945 that rules were relaxed somewhat and that light was allowed. There is no doubt that these rules were unpleasant and most activities were disrupted, there was grumbling, but these regulations were necessary. Crime increased with most lights being extinguished or at least dimmed. Under cover of darkness looting, theft, burglary and robbery numbers did grow. As a little girl in Appleby I never heard about these crimes, maybe they were kept quiet by Mr. Pointon, our village Bobby, or maybe they didn't take place in our village. But in larger centres, these crimes did happen, and it was considered a 'disgrace' and for sure, not patriotic while our country was at war.

In my mind's eye I can still hear my Grandfather Bates standing in our front field on a dark evening as planes flew overhead. He would rock back and forth on his heels and say, "by George, by Gum, Burton or Leicester is getting it this night". I stood beside him, a little girl not exactly understanding it all, but we could sometimes see a faint yellow glow on the horizon to the north or to the east, and I knew one of those cities were getting it. As we approached to re-entered the house Grandpa would check the



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windows and doors for any glimmer of light. We returned through the back door, did our 'side step jog', push aside the black curtain, then open the kitchen door, we were safe and warm again.

Milking the cows had another dimension to it for as the cows entered to be milked the big doors had to be opened wide, and again as they left. Our cowsheds were lit by electric light and we had electricity for the milking machines too. For the cows to enter and leave the lights were turned off and somehow the cows knew their way to their particular stall. The cows entered and the doors closed and the lights would be switched on again and milking could begin. The cows never seemed to bump each other, they never walked into a wall. When it was time to leave once again the lights were switched off and the cows made their exit safely.

The house was not as lucky as those cowsheds, in the house we had no electricity, we used paraffin lamps and candles. Grandma cooked on a big, black coal fired range and that range heated our hot water too.

Bomb blasts caused shock waves that could break glass in windows, paintings and yes, even mirrors. Depending on the direction of the shock wave the glass could force shattered glass fragments quite a distance from the actual bomb site. My Grandparents debated about actually taking pictures and paintings off the walls and storing them until peace returned. In the end anything with glass was placed in the cellar and dishes and drinking glasses not in everyday use also were packed away in boxes in the cellar. In both the Appleby schools, both the Church School and the Infants School, the windows were taped. This was required and everyone followed the rules.

In 1940 Winston Churchill initiated a change for all clocks in Britain, this was called 'Double Summer Time'. Instead of moving our clocks one hour forward in Spring, we moved them two hours forward. It was hoped that this extra hour of daylight would increase essential industrial production of war equipment and longer hours for farmers and gardeners to work their fields, their gardens and allotments. An increase in food production during those war years was imperative. The longer daylight hours also helped save fuel used for lighting and transportation. It also allowed daylight for workers to get home during the bombing raids. If nothing else, it certainly helped to boost morale during those dark years of the war. It may have added a spring to our step too. In theory it made sense that lives were saved and production did increase because of the 'double summer time'. Food of course was rationed, everyone had a ration book, and even though many complained about this, it did reduce pressure on the country's food supply.



The villagers in Appleby made more use of their vegetable gardens and allotments. "Dig for Victory" was a slogan we were very familiar with, we read it on posters, in shop windows, in magazines and newspapers. The British population were urged to

produce as much of their own food as possible. Nearly everyone in Appleby had a vegetable garden, a hutch for rabbits and a chicken coop. No land was left idle, and most people dug up their flower gardens and planted vegetables instead. These vegetable plots and garden patches, some even planted on the verges of our lanes, became affectionately known as "victory gardens", they were something to be proud of.



At my Ashby Girls School we had brick air raid shelters and they were built all around the perimeter of the rear playground. There was an entrance, and inside benches set into the walls. The entrance door was never locked or closed because at any moment the siren may sound and we would need to enter. We children were told never to go inside to play or hide. Of course we did, I found them to be damp, dark and very smelly. Maybe smelly because little boys often relieved themselves up against the walls instead of running to the toilets.

Anderson Air Raid Shelters were given to many households, these had to be half buried in people's gardens. They had a curved roof and a door at one end. These shelters were remarkably bomb-proof if bombs fell close by, that is unless they suffered a direct hit. Inside the shelter there was a bench along each side. These benches were used as a bed if used in the night, and as seats in day time. Some people kept the shelter stocked as much as they were able with a few food supplies, water and blankets. The Anderson Shelter did take up valuable back garden space, but to make up for this area, soil was often spread on the curved top of the shelter and a crop with small roots was planted there. Every bit of garden area was put to use for food for the family. Over a million Anderson Shelters were issued to households during those war years.

There was a popular 'hidey-hole' which most homes had. That was the cupboard underneath the stair case. Known to all of us as – the stair cupboard. For some large families not everyone could fit into this small space, but in an emergency the family dived in and squeezed together. The little ones crawled on to an adult knee, and the family felt together and safer. Many old houses and our farm house at Lower Rectory Farm had a cellar which was dark, damp and of course smelly. But it was a good place to hurry into for shelter if needed. We did practice going down those steep, brick stairs on one occasion. Grandma told me she thought she would rather face the Germans than go to the cellar again. I just did as I was told, and down I went, hoping I would only need to descend this one practice time.

It's been a busy year here at the Sir John Moore Foundation Museum. The plants in the courtyard have finally been cut back, and the birds that were here last summer have made a comeback.



Upstairs in the museum we've been busy having a good old clear-out and looking through our collection. We've got all sorts of documents! We've been reading through the Trustees' Minutes, which go all the way back to 1702. Then there's the Victorian school magazines, which proved valuable when we were researching some of the pupils who came to the school nearly 150 years ago. We've got a few new exhibitions up in the exhibition room, and got rid of a lot of cobwebs!

Big changes are on the way in October 1850 Victorian England ...

In October 1850, Victorian England was a period marked by industrial growth, cultural developments, and social changes. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was on the horizon, generating excitement about technology and progress.

The population was growing rapidly, leading to urbanisation and a shift from agrarian lifestyles. Social issues, such as child labor and women's rights, began to gain attention, with reformers advocating for change. Literature flourished, with authors like Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters capturing the complexities of society. October also saw the onset of autumnal festivities, as communities prepared for harvest celebrations, reflecting the era's rich cultural tapestry.

At the beginning of the 20th century, harvest time in England was a vibrant and crucial period, steeped in tradition and community spirit. This season typically spanned from late summer to early autumn, culminating in a series of celebrations that marked the culmination of months of hard work in the fields. Agricultural practices were still largely traditional, with many farmers relying on manual labor, horse-drawn machinery, and local labourers to bring in the crops.

The harvest was a time of both labour and festivity. Villagers came together to assist with the gathering of grains, fruits, and vegetables, creating a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. The rhythmic sound of scythes cutting through golden wheat fields resonated across the countryside, while the sweet scent of ripe produce filled the air. Once the fields were harvested, communities celebrated with harvest festivals, which included feasting, dancing, and various local customs. These events served to give thanks for bountiful crops and to reinforce social bonds.



In addition to the communal aspects, the early 20th century saw the introduction of new agricultural technologies, such as the reaper and later the combine harvester, which aimed to increase efficiency. However, many rural communities remained steeped in traditional practices, often passing down generational knowledge of farming techniques. This most probably the case around the fields of Appleby Magna.

As the Industrial Revolution continued to influence society, this period marked a transition, blending old customs with emerging innovations that would shape the future of agriculture in England.

Halloween, a celebration marked by spookiness, costumes, and an abundance of candy, has its roots in ancient traditions that have evolved significantly over centuries. In England, the history of Halloween is a fascinating blend of Celtic, Roman, and Christian influences that have shaped the way this holiday is celebrated today.

The origins of Halloween can be traced back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, which was celebrated on the night of October 31st. Samhain marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, a time believed to be fraught with danger. The Celts believed that on this night, the boundary between the living and the dead blurred, allowing spirits to return to the earth. To ward off these spirits, they would light bonfires and wear costumes made of animal skins. These early traditions set the stage for many customs associated with modern Halloween.

With the Roman conquest of Britain in 43 AD, two festivals were integrated into the Celtic calendar: Feralia, a day in late October when the Romans honoured the dead, and Pomona's Day, celebrating the goddess of fruit and trees. The melding of these traditions contributed to the rich tapestry of beliefs surrounding this time of year.

As Christianity spread throughout England, the church sought to replace pagan rituals with Christian observances. In the 8th century, Pope Gregory III designated November 1st as All Saints' Day, a day to honour saints and martyrs. The evening before, October 31st, became known as All Hallows' Eve, which gradually morphed into Halloween. This transition was not without resistance; many of the old pagan customs persisted, often reinterpreted through a Christian lens.

The Halloween traditions we recognise today began to take shape in the 19th century. The arrival of Irish

immigrants in the United States during the Great Famine of the 1840s brought with them their own customs, including the practice of carving turnips into lanterns to ward off evil spirits. This tradition evolved in America into the pumpkin carving we associate with Halloween today, which eventually found its way back to England in the later 20th century.



In England, Halloween was once a modest observance, primarily focused on the harvest and the changing of seasons. However, in the late 20th century, Halloween gained popularity as a commercial holiday. The influence of American culture through movies, television, and marketing transformed Halloween into a widely celebrated event in England. Costume parties, trick-or-treating, and themed events became

commonplace, reflecting a shift from a solemn commemoration of the dead to a festive celebration.

Today, Halloween in England is a blend of ancient customs, modern interpretations, and commercial influences. Children dress up in costumes ranging from traditional witches and ghosts to contemporary pop culture characters, while homes are adorned with decorations that evoke a sense of spooky fun. The tradition of trick-or-treating, though relatively new to England, has gained immense popularity, reflecting a growing enthusiasm for the holiday.

In conclusion, the history of Halloween in England is a testament to the enduring power of cultural traditions. From its ancient Celtic roots to its contemporary celebrations, Halloween continues to evolve while retaining echoes of its past. As the holiday grows in popularity, it serves as a reminder of the rich tapestry of history that shapes our modern celebrations, inviting us to embrace both the spooky and the whimsical aspects of this enchanting time of year.

