

1940s Fashions

As Tickhill is preparing to have a 1940s day on 10 June, this page focuses on the types of fashions which could have been or were seen around Tickhill in the 1940s. Useful sources of information for prevailing fashions are knitting and sewing patterns from the period (such as the examples below), a time when many people made their own clothes, sometimes using new wool (available from Miss Percy's wool shop on Market Place) or fabric (available from the Co-op Drapers on Castlegate, Jenkinsons Drapers on Market Place or Jarvis Drapers on Sunderland Street), sometimes unpicking old garments and reworking the unravelled wool or pieces of material. Both wool and fabric as well as ready-made clothes were rationed from June 1941 to March 1949. Note that, even when modelling jumpers, women are shown wearing hats, a reflection of a fashion - most women wore hats when going out in those days. Hats were not subject to rationing.



Other evidence for 1940s fashions comes, of course, from family photographs.

The wedding photograph on the left, courtesy of Jean Elliott, shows the effects of rationing, when knee-length day dresses replaced full length gowns for the bride and bridesmaid.

In complete contrast to the wartime utility designs of women's clothing (and utility clothing continued to be manufactured until March 1952), Christian Dior launched the New Look in Paris in 1947. Initially criticised in the UK for its extravagant use of fabric, it was not until 1949 that the style was available in most shops, coinciding with the end of rationing. Right, a coat

influenced by the New Look with nipped-in waist and full skirt. Note the additional fabric used for cuffs and the broad collar, possible after rationing ended. (Thanks to Linda Mayes for this photograph of her mother Pearl Cannings.)





When servicemen were demobilised after the war they returned their uniforms and kit to demobilisation centres where they were given civilian clothing. They could choose either a double-breasted pin stripe suit, such as the one illustrated left, or a single-breasted jacket with flannel trousers. (Not all these off-the-peg outfits fitted the men to whom they were given.) They could also choose between a trilby and a flat cap. Other clothing provided on demobilisation consisted of two shirts, a tie, shoes and a raincoat. This style of three piece suit would have been a familiar sight.

(Image © The Imperial War Museum, catalogue reference UNI2966)

For children in the 1940s, there were no specific children's fashions other than smaller versions of what adults wore with the exception that girls wore ankle socks in place of stockings and often had hair ribbons, while boys wore short trousers even until their teens. To cope with children's rapid growth, shoe and clothing exchanges were established by the Women's Voluntary Service. This second

hand clothing was exempt from coupons. New clothing for children during the years of rationing required coupons, usually one or two fewer than were needed by adults, although clothes for children less than 4 years old did not need coupons. (Photograph courtesy of Jean Elliott)



See: Shrimpton, J., *Fashion in the 1940s*, Shire Publications Ltd, 2016