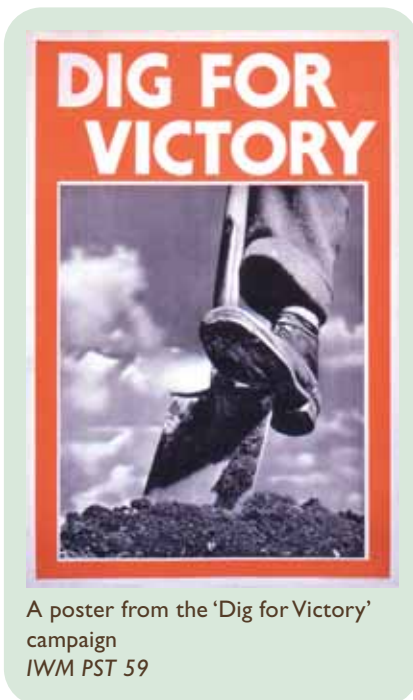


# Dig for Victory



Dig for Victory was a campaign launched by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1940 to help combat food shortage in Britain by promoting the planting of allotments in gardens and on public land.

Before the Second World War Britain imported approximately 55 million tonnes, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her food by ship each year. When the Second World War started in September 1939 shipping was attacked by enemy submarines and warships. Cargo ships were also used for war materials rather than food transportation. This resulted in food shortages.

The government had anticipated this, learning from the serious shortages of the First World War, which hit the poor worst, and at the start of the Second World War were ready to launch the rationing scheme and the Dig for Victory campaign. Rationing was introduced on 8 January 1940 and the Dig for Victory campaign was announced on BBC radio on 10 September 1940.

Dig for Victory was very successful. From 815,000 allotments in 1939 the number rose to 1,400,000 by 1943. Vast areas of public land, including the Royal Park Kensington Gardens, were converted into allotments and nearly a million tonnes of vegetables were grown in the peak years of production.

Food grown on allotments was an important supplement to rations. Although vegetables and fruit were never rationed, greengrocers often ran out of particular items such as onions. People, normally women, had to spend many hours each week queuing at shops trying to buy non-rationed foods. In fact by 1942 the government was promoting allotments in the cartoon film 'Filling the Gap' as a way to avoid wasting time in queues.