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Britain Under Threat: Civil Defence in the Era of
Total War, 1914–1989

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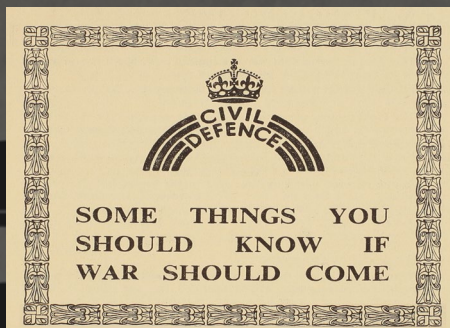
PUBLIC WARNING

Explore the changing nature of British civil defence ...

... throughout the twentieth century.

GERMAN

One of the defining characteristics of total war is the erosion of the distinction between the home front and the frontline. During the twentieth century, when total war reached its zenith, civilians became direct targets and new technologies threatened enormous destruction, not just on the conventional battlefield but in Britain itself. As a result, an entirely new wing of government was brought into being, responsible for civil defence, and tasked with protecting Britain and its citizens from these new and terrifying threats.



This collection brings together a diverse range of material on civil defence, responsibility for which was often shared among multiple government departments.

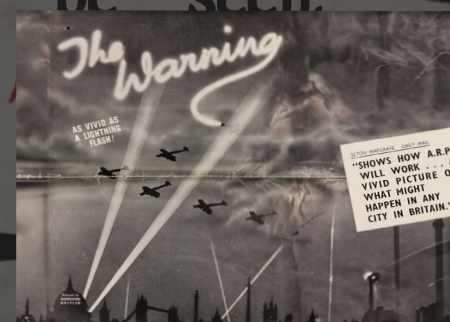
BRITISH



Key themes include the relationship between the state and its citizens, the changing face of warfare, views on class and gender during times of crisis, and the emotional effects of conflict on civilians.

Drawing on hundreds of underused government files at The National Archives (UK), this collection explores civil defence in Britain from 1914 to 1989. Throughout this period, civil defence took on a broad and diverse definition, encompassing everything from building air raid shelters and distributing gas masks to stockpiling medical supplies and issuing propaganda. As a result, this collection offers a unique window into many aspects of British life between 1914 and 1989.

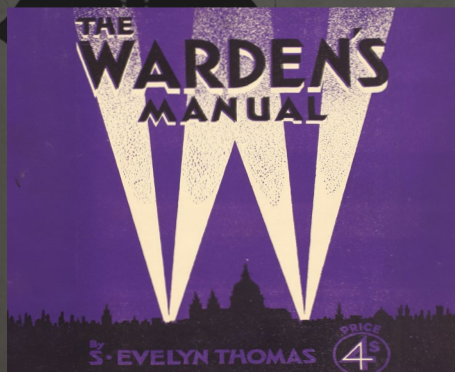
Should hostile aircraft be seen.



While the collection is rooted in the social, political, military, and cultural history of Britain, it also offers insights into psychology, sociology, design, and even architecture.



Civil defence officials consistently sought to communicate important messages to the public in engaging, clear, and memorable ways.



Civil defence was constantly evolving throughout the twentieth century. By utilising this collection, students and scholars can chart developments over 75 years.

The sources shed light on social dynamics, group psychology, design and mass production, concepts of home and family, public relations and propaganda, and government intervention. The documentation likewise facilitates exploration of discourses of citizenship, fear and other emotional responses, and the history of everyday life. In these ways, and in many others besides, this collection offers a major insight into the changing social, political, cultural, and ethical landscapes of modern Britain.



Sources include: The National Archives

and do not touch unexploded bombs.