

MARY CLARK'S WAR      1939-1945



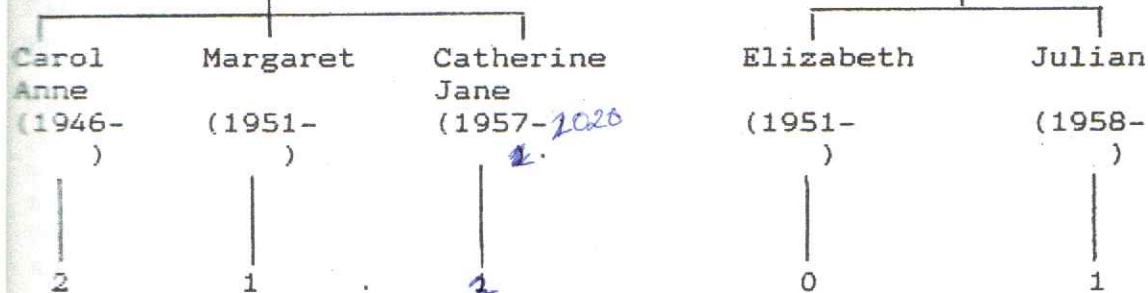
Mary, a photograph taken over 40 years after the war ended.

# Mary Clark's Family

Alice Hayward = Charles Clark  
(1892-1944) (1893-1961)

Edward Putt = MARY ALICE  
(1919-1977) (1921-*2000*)

Evelyn May = Arthur Howe  
(1925-1972) (1923- )



GRAND-  
CHILDREN OF  
MARY AND  
EVELYN

Alice Hayward and Charles Clark ( Mary's parents ) on their engagement.



I was 18 years old when war broke out in September 1939, and living with my father, mother and sister in North London. I worked as a clerical assistant in the Civil Service and my sister was training as a shorthand typist. The politicians had tried to avoid war, with Mr. Chamberlain meeting Herr Hitler. I so well remember the newspaper photographs of Mr. Chamberlain when he returned from Germany, waving the famous piece of paper in his hand, and folks thought that the threat of war had been averted. Sadly, war broke out on Sunday 2nd. September 1939.

I was in Church at morning service. The Verger brought in a message to the Vicar who told us that war had been declared on Germany. He then said prayers and we went our different ways home. On the way home, the Air Raid sirens sounded. An Air Raid Warden appeared and said I had to get off the street, and knocked on someone's door so that I could shelter there. I really wanted to get home, but the Warden wouldn't let me. It was a false alarm and the All Clear sounded very soon.

Lots of regulations soon came into force. The Air Raid wardens visited each house and the occupants were given an identity number and ration books were distributed for all basic foods such as meat, butter, eggs, sugar, tea, cheese and sweets. Sweet rationing ended on 24th April 1949.

Mary's identity card, in her married name of Mary Putt.

FOR OFFICIAL ENTRY ONLY (apart from Holder's Signature). ANY OTHER ENTRY OR ANY ALTERATION, MARKING OR ERASURE, IS PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OR IMPRISONMENT OR BOTH.

NUMBER	80:3	SURNAME	PUTT
CHRISTIAN NAMES (First only in full)		Mary A.	
CLASS CODE	A.N.		
FULL POSTAL ADDRESS		22 Kenwood Road H6	
HOLDER'S SIGNATURE		Mary A. Putt	
CHANGES OF ADDRESS. No entry except by National Registration Officer, to whom removal must be notified.			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)		22 GRIFFORD RD DOWLING OXFORD	
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)		Albany House Dodd	
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)		20 ELMS ROAD. CASSINGTON. OXFORD	
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)		23 ELMS ROAD CASSINGTON. OXFORD	
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)		CASSINGTON. OXFORD	

REGISTRATION OFFICE. OXFORD. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

Mary's last Ration Book, in her married name, Mary Putt. Look at the date.

R.B.1  
16

MINISTRY OF  
FOOD

1953-1954



SERIAL NO.

BA 322703

# RATION BOOK

Surname Putt Mary Initials A

Address 20 ELMS ROAD

CASSINGTON. NR. OXFORD.

IF FOUND RETURN TO ANY FOOD OFFICE		F.O. CODE No.  S - B 1
---	--	---------------------------------

## 1941 Price List

Tomatoes	1s.2d.	a lb
Bacon	1s.4d.	a lb
Baked beans	4d.	a ca
Tinned soup	6½d.	a ca
Cocoa	5d.	q.
Newspaper	1d.	each
Dozen eggs	2s.11d.	
Shampoo (1g)	4d.	
Brilliantine	7½d.	
Toothbrush	1s.6d.	each
Toothpaste	7½d.	
Orange juice	2s.6d.	(1g
Oxydol wash-		
up powder	1s.0d.	a b
Sunlight Soap		
flakes	6d.	a b
Weetabix	7½d.	
20 cigarettes	1s.5½d.	

Bread 4d a loaf,  
margarine 8d a lb, Mrs Pecks  
tinned pudding 1/-, 4oz can  
of baked beans 2d, hazel  
nuts 1/- a lb., tin of Cardinal  
polish in white, for steps and  
paths in the blackout, 6d.  
'Pool' petrol, which cost  
1/6d a gallon at the outbreak  
of war, was raised to 2/1d.

Shopkeepers had to mark off in the books each week when goods were purchased. We, as a family, managed quite well as my mother used to be able to make the rations stretch out. Honey was used in cakes instead of sugar and of course, dried egg powder too. We had an allotment that provided all our vegetables and the fruit such as gooseberries, raspberries, blackcurrants and rhubarb that was made into jam when the sugar allowed. Rationing did not end completely until 1954.

We were also issued with gas masks and had to carry them with us everywhere - even babies had a cot-type mask to protect them - they were completely covered with it. Thankfully, the Germans didn't use gas on their bombing raids.

Air raids, known as the Blitz, started in September 1940. I lived in a suburb of North London and we had an Anderson shelter in the back garden. It was a corrugated iron structure built into the ground. The soil from the top was put all over the top and sides. My father used to grow runner beans and plant flowers on it. It held four bunk beds and room in the middle for an easy chair. My father even made a cat flap in the door and our cat was always first down there - he heard the 'planes a long way off, even before the sirens went. We made it very comfortable, my father, mother, sister and I. We used to sleep in it all night, from about 7 pm when the sirens went, until it was time to get up to get ready for work. We didn't know what we might find when we emerged from the shelter. One night, a land mine fell not far away into a coal yard and we had enough coal to last us for weeks, that had blown into the garden. That night, all the windows were blown out at the back of the house and we had no gas, electricity or water that day. We always had to be ready for these emergencies, with water put into containers over night and food always stored safely. We had a coal fire cooker so we could always get hot water for a wash or a cup of tea, and also get a hot meal of sorts.

We always took a small case into the shelter which contained a change of clothes and toilet things. The Germans sometimes dropped bombs or land mines that didn't go off, so we had to leave our houses and go off some distance to a Church or school hall to be looked after by the Voluntary Services until such time as it was safe to return home. One evening, I came home from work and there was a Warden at a barrier at the end of our road, stopping folks going to their houses. He told me where to join all our neighbours. A barrage balloon had come adrift from its moorings and had landed on the roof tops of several houses and the chains had ripped tiles off the roofs and broken windows (barrage balloons were used in open spaces, in groups, so that enemy aircraft couldn't come down low to machine gun civilians).

Travelling was very difficult at times. I worked for the Ministry of Supply as a Civil Servant, just off Whitehall. I used the Tube as it was underground, and safer and quicker during the day time. One had to be prepared to change one's plans as you didn't know from day to day just what you were going to find when you got into London. The centre of London fared far worse than we did out in the suburbs. Nightly raids played havoc, with roads up, so you found yourself walking quite a long way. Even raids during the day time would make you change your route home in the evening.

My sister worked in the Air Ministry building in the Strand/Queensway area. Part of the building had a direct hit one lunchtime. She went into her office, her friend went into the Post Office nearby and was killed. My sister was cut about the face and legs with flying glass and suffered shock. She came home on her own. It was such a shock to open the door and find her like that. She was so shocked by her experience that she left London to live with our first cousin whose husband ran a pub in a little village in Oxfordshire. It was there that she and I met our future husbands, local boys who were serving in the Royal Artillery and the Grenadier Guards.

Our family were very lucky to come through it all. My mother used to worry about us and never knew if she would see us again when we left in the morning. My father was a Guard on the London and North Eastern Railway and had to get to King's Cross each day for his shifts. He would be away for anything up to 17 hours a day and would also run into raids which delayed his train, which meant getting out and putting warning lights out on the track to warn approaching trains there was danger ahead.

Shops and offices were encouraged to train their staff in First Aid. I took my Gold Medal in the St. John's Ambulance Service and used to do a night duty rota with the Home Guard and Air Raid Wardens on a regular basis. One night, we had just settled down for our first rest period when the alarm went. A stick of incendiary bombs had fallen straight down the centre well of the building, causing mainly a smoke hazard. We immediately did what we had trained for - I got the nearest stirrup pump and bucket of water, put the stirrup pump in the bucket the wrong way round and had water all over my feet! One of the Home Guard chaps on duty in the main hallway threw himself on the ground when the bombs fell and broke his collar bone, so I did get to do some first aid as well.

Everyone suffered from the effects of bombing on the essential services, such as gas, electricity and water. We spent days in the shelters, unable to do our work. On one awful day, a land mine fell on a block of flats in Westminster and we first aiders were called out of the office to help dig for survivors, which we did with our bare hands. Hundreds were killed.

A lot of the Government offices in Central London decided to evacuate their offices to quieter surroundings. My office was evacuated to Leeds, the office quite near to the main railway station. And what happened? We had hardly unpacked all our possessions two days later when we were bombed again. The raids were then being directed on targets in the Midlands. We all know what happened to Coventry and the main ports. It wasn't just the danger from bombing that affected us - our local church was bombed and we had our church services in the local cinema, the Athenaeum.

As the years of war went on, more and more women were needed to "Keep the home fires burning", as the war-time song went. My parents were still in London and my mother not very well - she worried about us all - all the time. I didn't want to volunteer for the women's services. Somehow it wasn't me, and I knew it would make my mother worry even more. Locally, they were wanting recruits for the Women's Land Army, so I volunteered for that and I chose horticulture, rather than a farming job. There were no vacancies nearer home ( London ), but I was sent to join three other girls to work in Roundhay Park in Leeds, alongside the Park Garden and Maintenance Department staff. All public parks had to give over 75% of their production to vegetables and the other 25% was retained for growing flowers which were used for decorating Town Halls etc. So, one day I could start hoeing carrots and then be asked to pick a basket of so many roses, carnations or whatever was needed for that day's arrangements. We also had to help in the tomato greenhouses which would normally have been growing exotic plants. Potatoes were grown by the ton in the out-of-the-way parts of the Park. Life in the potting shed in the winter months was very cozy, with a lovely coal fire to keep us warm in between jobs outside.

Eventually, I managed to get a transfer to Kings Langley in Hertfordshire, nearer home. There, I still did some market gardening and also looked after chickens, ducks and goats, one of which butted me in the behind! The farm cat used to like catching ducks, so we ate plenty of duck. The property was used as a small private school and with the help of the owners, we became self-sufficient.

I spent a happy year and a half there, but as my mother needed me at home, because of her illness, I had to resign. She died after a short while and then I stayed at home to look after my father. The Department of Employment hounded me to get a job. I found one locally, working part-time at Boots the Chemist, and one afternoon and evening a week I did voluntary Red Cross nurse work at a large private mansion which was used as a Convalescent Home. Patients were sent there after being in hospital, or if their homes had been bombed. On the top floor, in the attic rooms, there were always some service personnel, resting before going onto active service again. One day, when I was on duty, we heard a lot of aircraft going over, squadrons of Lancaster bombers. We knew the Invasion of France had happened. The Free French airmen who were recuperating ran out onto the grass, waving their arms and hugging everyone.

Mary ( in her Land Army uniform ) with her father.



I had been writing to my future husband since 1939, when I first met him. He was away for three and a half years, and I didn't see him until he had his first leave. He had been in the Royal Artillery since the start of the war and had served with the Desert Rats at El Alamein and Tobruk. Then, he went to Crete and was safely brought home after a 30 mile trek across the mountains. His Company had been brought home especially to be sent to France in the Invasion. All the troops gathered in Southern England with the guns, tanks etc, ready for D Day, but, while in Egypt, the troops had to take quinine for malaria. When they came home, it was stopped, so, instead of them going to France on D Day, there were thousands stricken down with malaria, and they didn't leave England until D Day+4, much to my relief as you can imagine, as I found out later.

Buzz bombs began dropping while I was at home. These were pilotless 'planes that were timed to land and explode on impact. One could not judge where they would fall and, as they carried a lot of explosive, they did a lot of damage. The only thing people could do when they heard one was to take cover, as the blast travelled outwards in all directions. My father and I were putting flowers on my mother's grave at Finchley Cemetery when we heard the engine stop and the buzz bomb begin to fall. We threw ourselves down but luckily, it exploded well away from us. When we looked up, we saw a great stone guardian angel on the next grave! My father's words were " Good God ". These V1 and the V2 rockets kept falling until March 1945.

While we at home were surviving as best we could, the armies of Britain and the Allied forces, including my fiance, were pushing the Germans back. France was liberated and there was a triumphal march through Paris, and then on into Germany. The Royal Air Force had been bombing German cities, munitions dumps and railway installations, and caused terrible devastation in Germany.

We were looking forward to the end of hostilities. VE day happened at last on May 8th. 1945. There were great festivities all over the country and especially in London. Strangely enough, I really can't remember what I did on such an important day. My fiance and I arranged to be married on 2nd. June 1945, but after a two week leave, he had to return to Germany, as the war in the Far East still hadn't ended. He was finally demobbed on 6th. June 1946 and returned home.

Mary and Ted's wedding photograph  
( because of wartime shortages of  
chemicals etc, photographs were  
very small).



His job ( as a watchmaker in Oxford ) had been kept open for him throughout the war. He had only been 19 when war started, so had not finished his apprenticeship by the age of 25. Until he qualified ( which would be in another two years' time ), he would earn very little. He had been unable to save much, as part of his pay as a soldier had been sent to his widowed mother. He had £70 as a gratuity when he left the Army and I only worked part time, so we had little to start our married life on. We were fortunate enough to get rented rooms in the house belonging to a relation of my husband, but had registered with the local council in the village where my husband was born, to get our names on the housing list. We had to wait five years before we were allocated a council house, due to the terrible housing shortage.

During the war years, we survived through our own ingenuity. We had to work very hard to keep a relatively normal life. Even when our Armed forces had great victories, we had mixed feelings because our loved ones might be killed or injured. We learnt never to waste anything, an attitude I still have. Once the war was over and I left London, my real married life started, making a new home for myself, my husband and, eventually, our three children.

Mary's two eldest children, Carol and Margaret, with their father, and dog, in the garden of their house in Oxfordshire in 1953.



Margaret's identity card. Note that the war time regulations were still in force six years after the war ended, when she was born.

