

13th September 2021 at 20.00

Meeting at Ashtead Baptist Church

Chaired by: Sarah Minister

Number of participants: 30 members plus speaker

Joint President Sarah Minister welcomed members back to a meeting in person in the Baptist Hall and expressed her delight in being able to see people in real life rather than on Zoom.

Sarah introduced Meryl White our speaker who talked about Baking and Food Rationing in The First and Second World Wars.

Meryl wrote a book, "Grandma Abson's Traditional Baking", in tribute to her grandmother who died in 1977. Her grandmother lived through two world wars and bought up Meryl and her sister. This book sold over 3,000 copies for charity and followed by a website www.grandmaabson.com where she shares her passion for baking. While in Yorkshire she regularly gave talks to schoolchildren and local groups but is able to talk to us tonight as she moved to Surrey to be nearer her daughter and grandchildren in the autumn 2020.

The foundations for food rationing during the Second World War started during the First World War. In January 1918 there was rationing but the rich could buy what they wanted and the ration books issued were hit and miss. There were fines and possible imprisonment for breaches but they were not necessarily enforced.

By the 1930s Britain was heavily reliant on food imports –for example importing 70% of our cereal needs and 30% cheese so strategies to negate this dependence were devised and people were encouraged to grow their own food. The plans for tougher rationing, taking into account the problems with rationing in 1918, were also drawn up so that the day after World War 2 started ration books were issued. Rationing continued to the early 1950s with meat being the last item removed in 1954.

To help people manage the reduction in food Lord Woolton organised the distribution of 40 million leaflets teaching people how to cook with new ingredients such as dried eggs, recipes and prevent food waste. Dig for Victory and the formation of the Woman's Land Army also were created to increase food production and prevent hunger in the population.

By the end of the Second World War although meals were boring the British population was said to be at its healthiest as people had had access to a balanced diet.

Meryl can be contacted at grandmaabson@gmail.com.

Sarah thanked Meryl for her interesting and informative talk and said that it is difficult for us to image what it must have been like living with food shortages and rationing.

Notices

Congratulations were offered to Gill Chater on her forthcoming wedding.

Volunteers are wanted to help with setting up the hall for the meeting, refreshments and to join the Committee.

The Arts and Craft group will restart on 4/10/21 in the hall.

Please email Ashtead Wing if you would like to join a special interest group or speak to a committee member/ interest group leader.

Next meeting on **11th October 2021** and members are invited to contribute bottles for a Tombola stall. Please remember to bring a mug for refreshments and money for the tombola stall.