

The background is a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of small white stars. Overlaid on this are several faint, light blue technical diagrams. These include circular gauges with numerical scales (e.g., 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210) and arrows, and various concentric circles and dashed lines, suggesting a theme of technology, science, or data analysis.

**Britain is Blacked Out**

# New Restrictions on the Home Front, Front,

## Britain is Blacked Out!

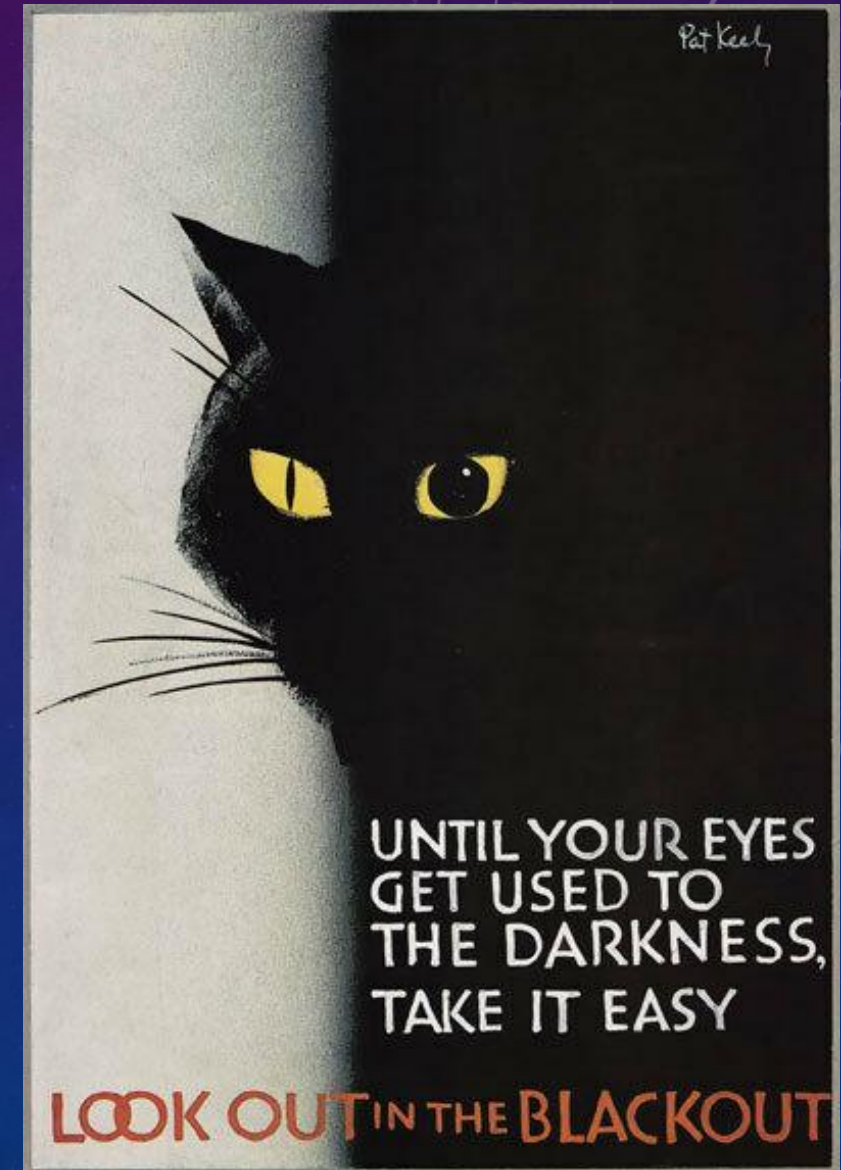
On the 1st September 1939, two days before the outbreak of war, Britain was blacked out.

The Blackout imposed on everyone was absolute.

No chinks of light, no see through curtains, no car headlights.

Even the red glow of a cigarette was banned.

Britain was plunged into complete darkness.






# Why was Britain Blacked Out!



*PICTURES: Blackout times for today are.....*

<b>BLACK-OUT 8.22p.m. to 5.41a.m.</b>			
<b>Sun</b>	<b>rises</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>a.m.</b>
	<b>sets</b>	<b>7.52</b>	<b>p.m.</b>
<b>Moon</b>	<b>rises</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>a.m.</b>
	<b>sets</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>p.m.</b>



The Air Ministry forecast that Britain would be exposed to sudden air attacks from enemy night bombers causing high civilian casualties and mass destruction.

It was widely agreed that if lights on the ground could be put out then the enemy bombers would find it more difficult to navigate and pinpoint their targets.

Public Information Leaflet No 2 (issued as part of the Air Raid Patrol (A.R.P.) training literature) warned civilians that everybody would need to play their part and ensure that the Blackout regulations were properly enforced during the Blackout periods.

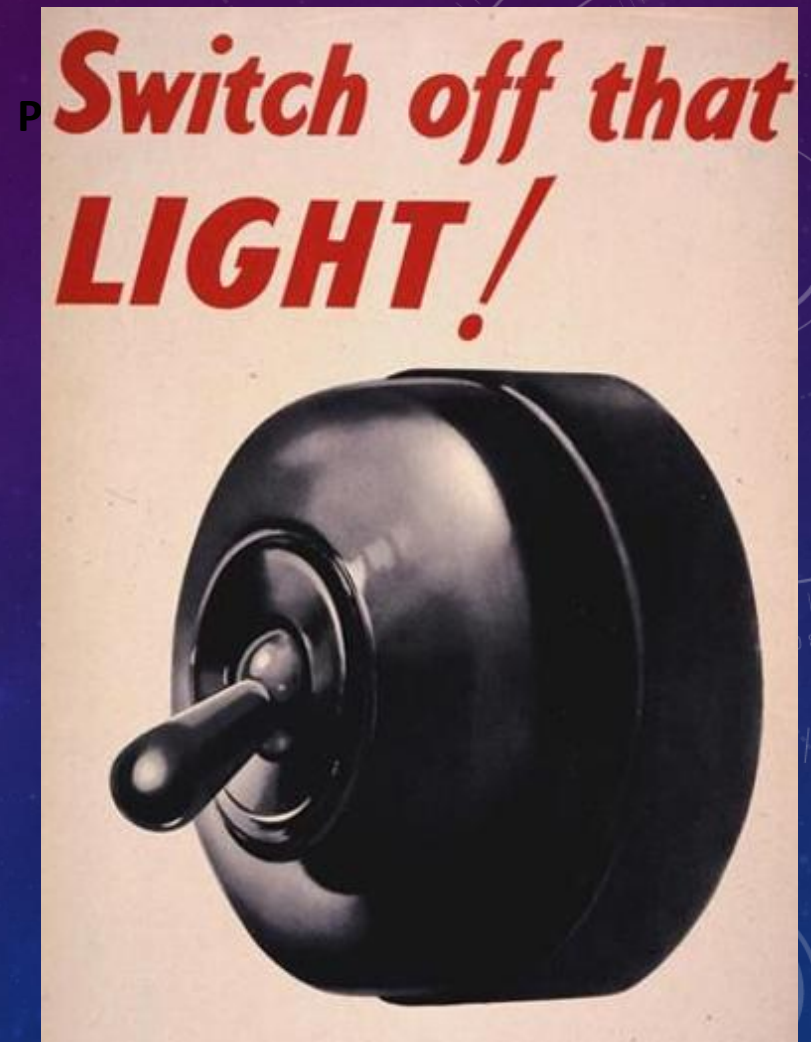


The Blackout challenge:

The Government had to make sure that there was enough Blackout material for each household.

This Blackout material had to be readily available but cheap enough for even the poorest families.

In most cases black cotton fabric was used. The bigger the house you had the more expensive it was to blackout.



The local A.R.P. could report anyone to the local authorities if any sign of a light was seen.

Being reported could lead to a hefty fine or in some cases an appearance in court.



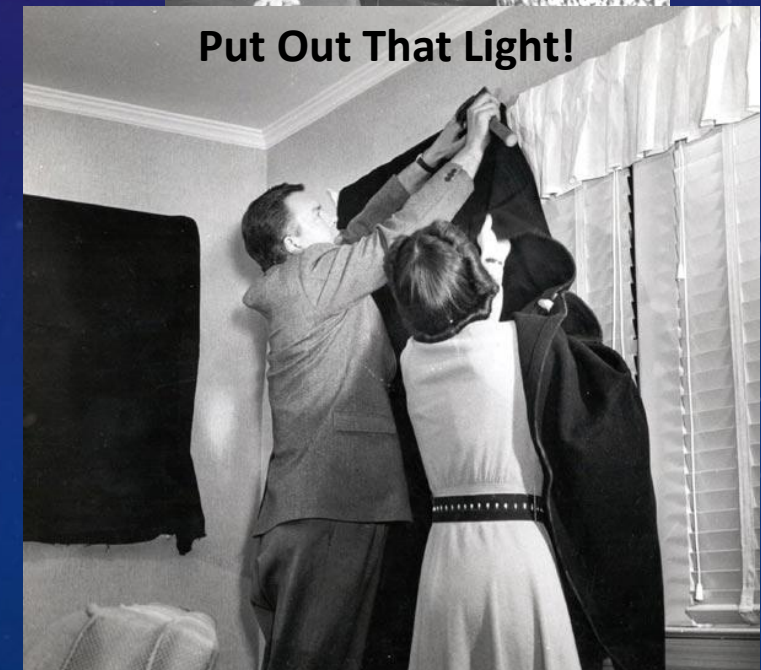
Putting up Blackout material was more difficult than was first imagined and quickly became a tedious chore .

Families could spend a long time putting up the Blackout materials only to find that one thickness of fabric was not enough to stop light from escaping and drawing the attention of a A.R.P. warden or eagle eyed neighbour.

Often, two or three thicknesses were required before all light was snuffed out.

Attaching blackout fabrics to window frames could prove troublesome. Householders were lucky if they had wooden frames but many had stone or metal frames proving that hanging this fabric could be an achievement in itself.

Some tried to save time by lining their windows with black paper and pins. This was fine initially but with the continuous taking down and putting back up this method didn't last long!



**Put Out That Light!**



## ***Factories***

Businesses faced even greater difficulties with the introduction of the Blackout. Many factories had glass roofs which had to be painted black meaning that workers had to work day and night under the glare of artificial lights. This affected morale and was expensive for employers who has increased fuel bills.

This is Chantry Mills in Haverhill.  
They probably painted their north lights black.



## ***Local Shopkeepers***

Local shopkeepers didn't fair much better either. As well as darkening their windows they had the added dilemma of how customers could leave their shops without any light escaping.

The solution was often a double door much like a photographer's dark room where people would open one door and shut it behind them before opening the main shop door.



## Road Accidents on the Increase!

<b>TO BLACKOUT WALKERS</b>	<b>TO BLACKOUT DRIVERS</b>
	
<b>YOUR TURN MAY COME TONIGHT</b>	<b>YES - SHE DID SEE YOU COMING, BUT . . .</b>
There's danger in the dark. Thousands have already been killed on the roads. Remember—in the blackout the motor driver can't see you until he's almost on top of you. You carry your life on your legs.	she didn't know that you couldn't see her—that was the trouble. You <i>must</i> drive so that at any moment you can pull up within the range of your vision.
WALK <b>C-A-R-E-F-U-L-L-Y</b>	DRIVE <b>S-L-O-W-L-Y</b>
<b>IN THE BLACKOUT</b>	<b>IN THE BLACKOUT</b>
Issued by the Ministry of War Transport	Issued by the Ministry of War Transport

Total darkness was exciting for some because it meant their first glimpse of the night sky without the glare of city lights.

However for most trying to get around was confusing, frightening and dangerous.

The number of road accidents increased and drownings also rose dramatically where people fell off bridges and into rivers or into ponds.

As can be seen from the newspaper clipping (see below) fatalities and serious injuries were a reality of the Blackout.

### He Stepped from Train, Fell 80ft.

A man was taken badly injured to hospital at Hillingdon, Middlesex, early yesterday after stepping from a train and falling over an soft viaduct near Denham, Buckinghamshire, in the black-out.

The train was stopped by signal when the man, telling another passenger that he had to change at Ruislip and supposed that was the station, stepped from the carriage. He is believed to live at High Wycombe.

*Press article from the Daily Sketch*

*Press article from the Daily Sketch warning people to be careful in the Blackout*



People complained bitterly that the Blackout saw crime rocket, particularly petty crime such as pick pocketing and the raiding of vegetable patches.

Crime did increase but not as much as people exaggerated.

The simple fact is that petty criminals could never be sure if people were at home or not during the Blackout and often thought it better not to take the chance of breaking into houses in case they came face to face with the householder!



### Hard Labour for Theft of Cabbage

Two Norwich labourers, Donald Arthur Francis (21), and Walter Groom (49), were at Norwich to-day sentenced to 28 days' hard labour for stealing growing cabbages.

Ralph Arthur Fisher, market gardener, said he caught the men on his cabbage field, Francis having four cabbages and Groom three. They were valued at 3d each.

The Chairman (Mr C. H. Walter), said: "Stealing vegetables is going on everywhere, and this Bench is determined to stop it."

*Report from a newspaper  
13<sup>th</sup> March 1943*



**Street lights were switched off or dimmed and shielded to deflect the light downward.**

**Traffic lights and vehicle headlights were fitted with slotted covers to deflect the beam down to the floor.**





## Driving in the Blackout



This poster reminded motorists of how they should prepare and use their car in the Blackout.

It told them that they should display no interior lights and use a slit mask (comprising of 3 horizontal slits) for the headlamp, an ingenious invention introduced in 1940.

Indicators had to be dimmed and the red rear lamp also had to be reduced.

Lights were so dim and pointed downwards that most motorists could not see easily see where they were going.

Eventually due to this and also petrol rationing fewer and fewer cars were seen on the roads during WWII.

Poster advising motorists of how they should prepare and use their car in the Blackout



# What effect did the Blackout have on people's lives ?



Thousands of people died in road accidents.

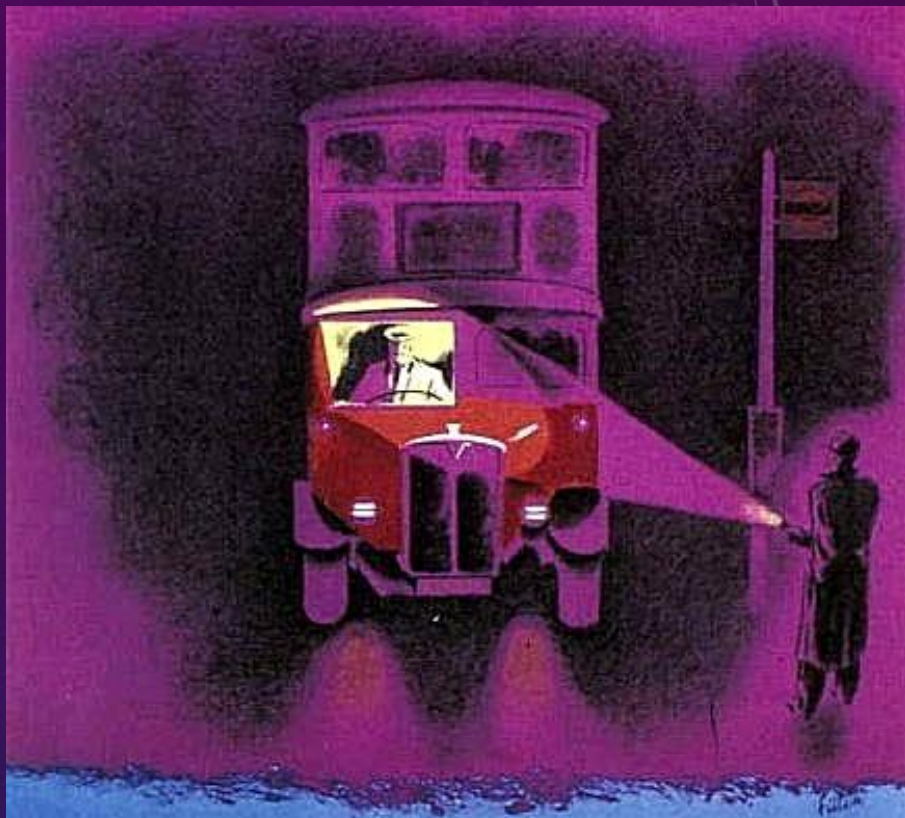
The number of road accidents increased because of the lack of street lighting and the dimmed traffic lights. To help prevent accidents white stripes were painted on the roads and on lamp-posts.

People were encouraged to walk facing the traffic and men were advised to leave their shirt-tails hanging out so that they could be seen by cars with dimmed headlights.

Other people were injured during the Blackout because they could not see in the darkness. Many people were injured tripping up, falling down steps, or bumping into things.







IT'S DANGEROUS TO FLAG  
A BUS WITH YOUR TORCH

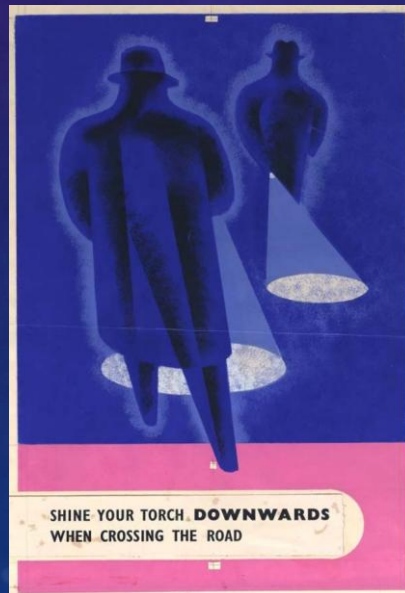


*PICTURES: Posters reminding pedestrians how to use their torches.*

The authorities decided that they needed to do something to reduce the numbers of pedestrian accidents.

They issued small pocket torches (the No. 8). However No. 8 batteries for these torches were scarce and most people continued to wander aimlessly in the dark.

If you were lucky enough to have batteries you had to place tissue paper over the main beam of the torch and point it downwards. The torches could be used to hail a bus during the Blackout but the Ministry of Information stated that the following must be adhered to.



***"Shine your torch in a downwards direction so that the beam lights up your feet. As the bus approaches, switch the light of the torch on and off twice. Never shine the torch into the face of the bus driver, Do not shine your torch up at the destination board."***



# What else did the authorities do to try to make things safer?

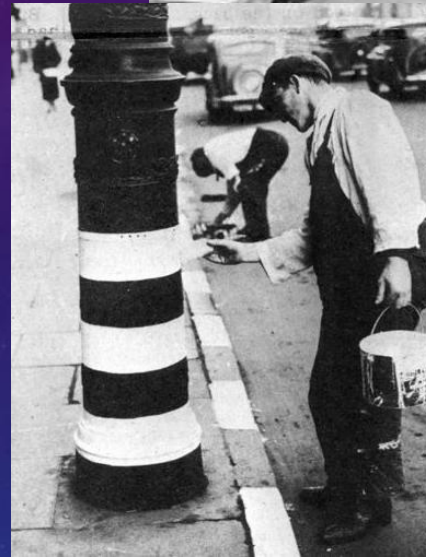
In 1940 the speed limit for motorists was reduced to 20 mph during the Blackout.

Central white lines were painted in the middle of roads (which are still with us today) and curb edges were painted white as well.

Kerb finders could also be used. These were attached to a walking stick or umbrella.

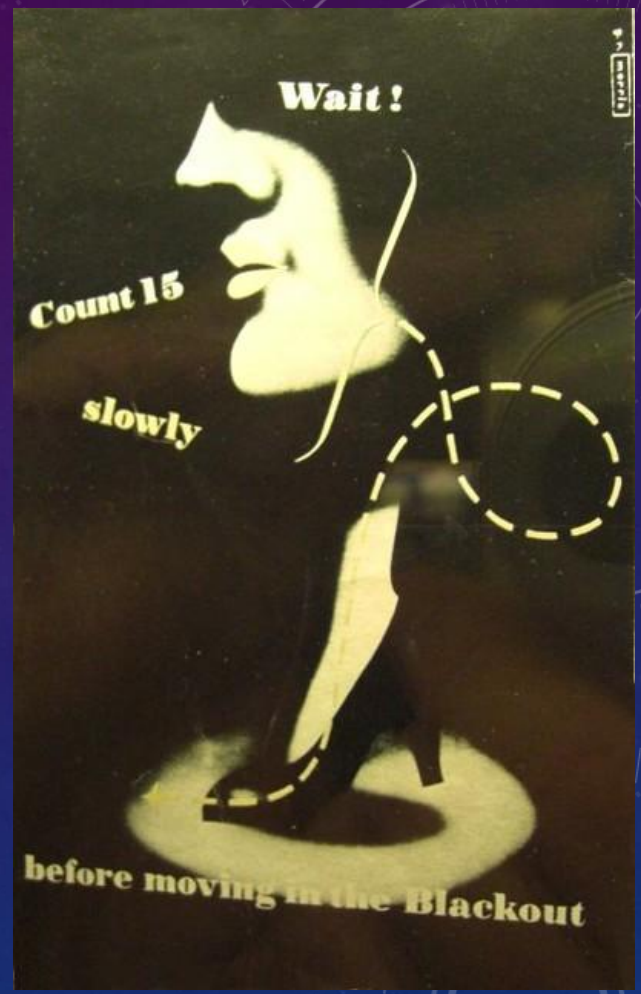
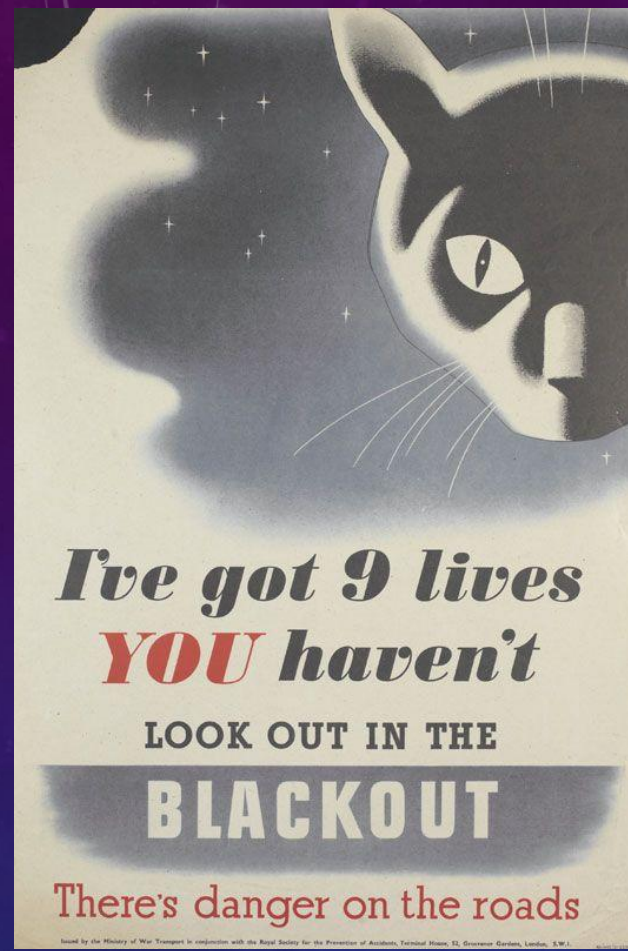
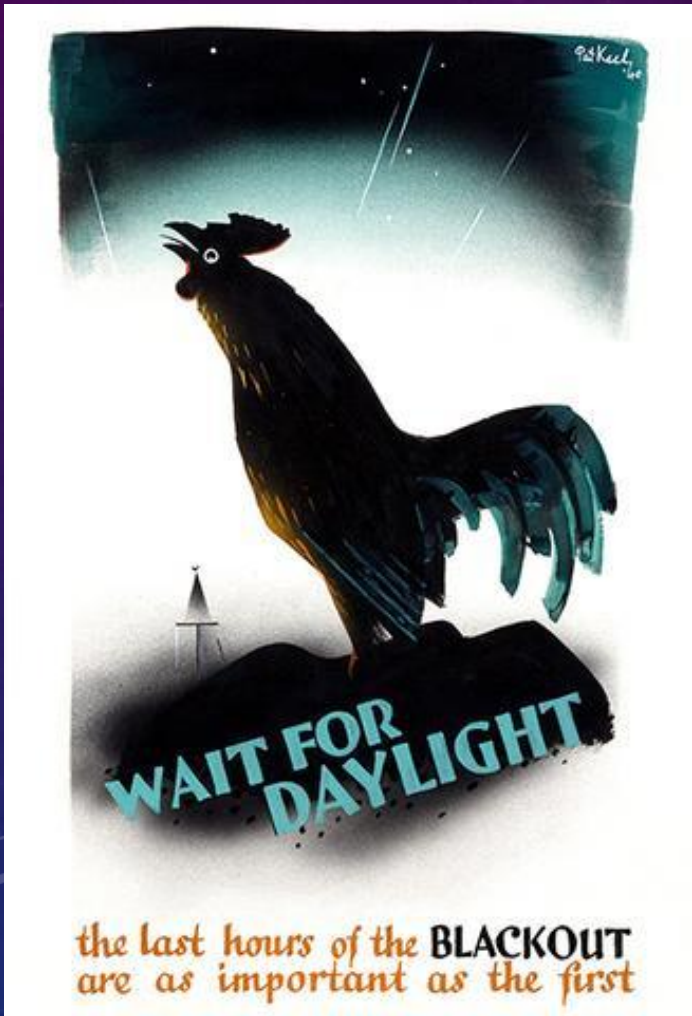
Pedestrians were reminded that they should always walk facing the traffic and that they should carry or wear something white.

Armbands that were luminous in the dark were also worn. These were exposed to the daylight to absorb light and emitted light in darkness.





There were lots of posters published to remind people of the dangers of the blackout.







## CARROTS

keep you healthy and help you  
to see in the blackout

## HE THOUGHT HE COULD JUST DO IT



It wasn't far—just a few yards across the road. He wanted to catch the bus home, so he took a chance and ran for it. Death happened to get in his way. It was nothing very unusual, literally hundreds of people are killed or injured in the black-out every week. Nearly 1,200 road deaths in December alone. Remember the new speed limit cannot alter the fact that you can see the car before the driver can see you. How often do you hurry and 'just do it'? Will the luck hold?

**Remember these:** 1. When you get home at the black-out, stand with the windows to the street, open them to the maximum. 2. Look out before getting into the car. 3. When you are in the car, look at the driver. 4. When the light of your headlights is on the ground, on the 200 to 500 yards ahead.

**LOOK OUT IN THE BLACK-OUT!**

## 20 M.P.H. IN BLACK-OUT NOW



# BUT—

**YOU CAN STILL SEE CARS  
LONG BEFORE DRIVERS SEE YOU!**

## BLACKOUT — LOOK OUT!

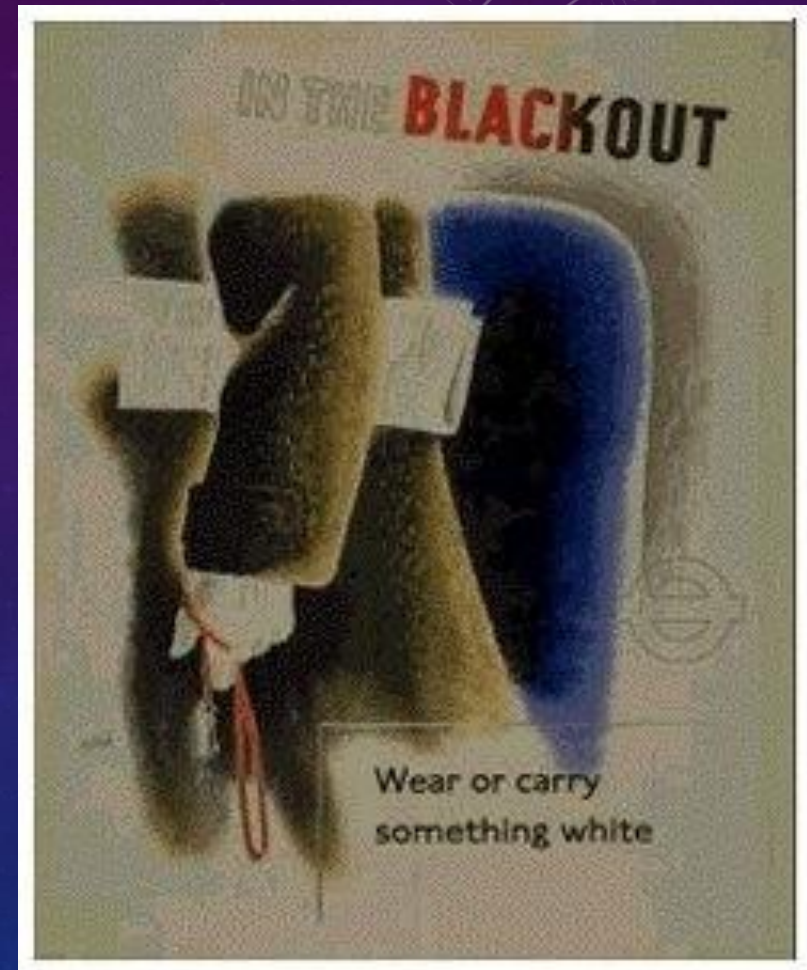
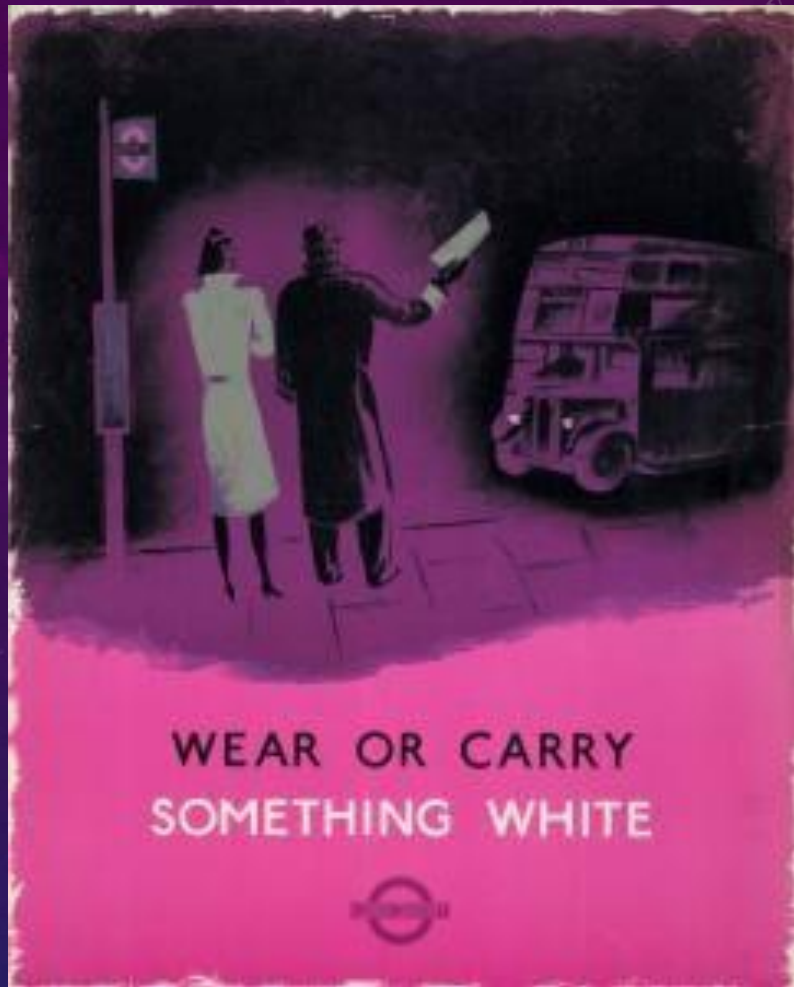


- MAKE SURE THAT YOUR TRAIN IS AT A STATION BEFORE OPENING CARRIAGE DOOR.
- MAKE SURE YOUR CARRIAGE IS AT A PLATFORM BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO ALIGHT.
- MAKE SURE THAT YOU USE THE DOOR ON THE PLATFORM SIDE OF THE CARRIAGE.

**BRITISH RAILWAYS**  
GWR · LMS · LNER · SR · LT

IWM







**Some unusual things were painted!**



The courts took infringements of the black out very seriously.

## Gaol for Black-Out Offenders ?

### MAYOR'S WARNING AT BURY COURT.

**"Not an Empty Threat."**

The warning given at Bury Petty Sessions last week that offenders under the lighting restrictions may be sent to prison if fines do not have the desired effect was re-iterated by the Mayor (Ald. E. L. D. Lake) at the Sessions in the Guildhall yesterday (Thursday) morning. "Last week," said the Mayor, "Dr. Stork warned the public that if fines would not stop the displaying of lights during the black-out, the Bench would not hesitate to send people to prison. I want to warn the public that the threat is not an empty threat from this Bench. The lives of hundreds, if not thousands, depend on an effective black-out, and the Bench will not hesitate to make imprisonment the punishment in the future if they see fit."

Bury Free Press - Saturday 06 July 1940

## THE BLACK-OUT.

Sir,—I have noticed a little slackness this winter regarding black-out. It may interest careless folk to read what a Squadron-Leader wrote last Thursday.

He said: "I have been a pilot for 18 years in the Royal Air Force, and I can assure people that the black-out is not sufficient. Have they never been in one of the many big bomb raids, or is their mind such that they soon forget? A light from a window can be seen for many miles away, and the faintest light will give a pilot some indication where he is. People who want the black-out lessened are asking to be bombed."

Let us all heed his words

**BURY RESIDENT.**

Bury Free Press - Saturday 18 October 1941



### FRIEND PUT LIGHT ON.

Mrs. Rosalind Peace, 2, Cornhill Chambers, Bury St. Edmund's, was summoned for permitting a light to be displayed from her residence during the black-out on September 25th.

Defendant's husband attended the Court and pleaded not guilty. Special Constable E. C. Woods said he was crossing the Corn Hill with Special Constable Hogg at 9.50 p.m. when he saw an unscreened light from a window at No. 2, Corn Hill Chambers. He interviewed Mrs. Peace, who said that a guest had been after coal and put the light on not knowing there was no black-out. Witness added that the light was showing right across the Corn Hill.

Special Constable Hogg also gave evidence.

Defendant's husband, Lawrence Gordon Peace, said that his wife was in the sitting room with several friends and asked one of them to go in the front room for some coal for the fire. The room was not occupied that evening so that the black-out was not up. His wife said to the friend, "Take the torch," or, in other words, "Don't switch on the lights as the black-out is not up." The friend very foolishly switched on the light and the two special constables came along. Witness added that the light could not possibly have been on for more than about a minute. His wife appreciated the necessity for maintaining a very strict black-out.

The Mayor, in announcing a fine of £3, said that if rooms were not blacked-out the electric bulb should be taken out or the room locked to make certain that these things could not happen.

### For Black-Out Offence

---

At Melford Sessions on Friday, Lady Ulla Hyde Parker, The Grange, Long Melford, was summoned for causing a light to show from her house during the hours of black-out.

In a letter to the Bench, Lady Hyde Parker stated that the light was on a landing and that it was an accident that the black-out had not been closed.

She was fined £2.

Suffolk and Essex Free Press - Thursday 05 August  
1943

Bury Free Press - Saturday 05 October 1940

# BLACKOUT TURNS TO DIM-OUT



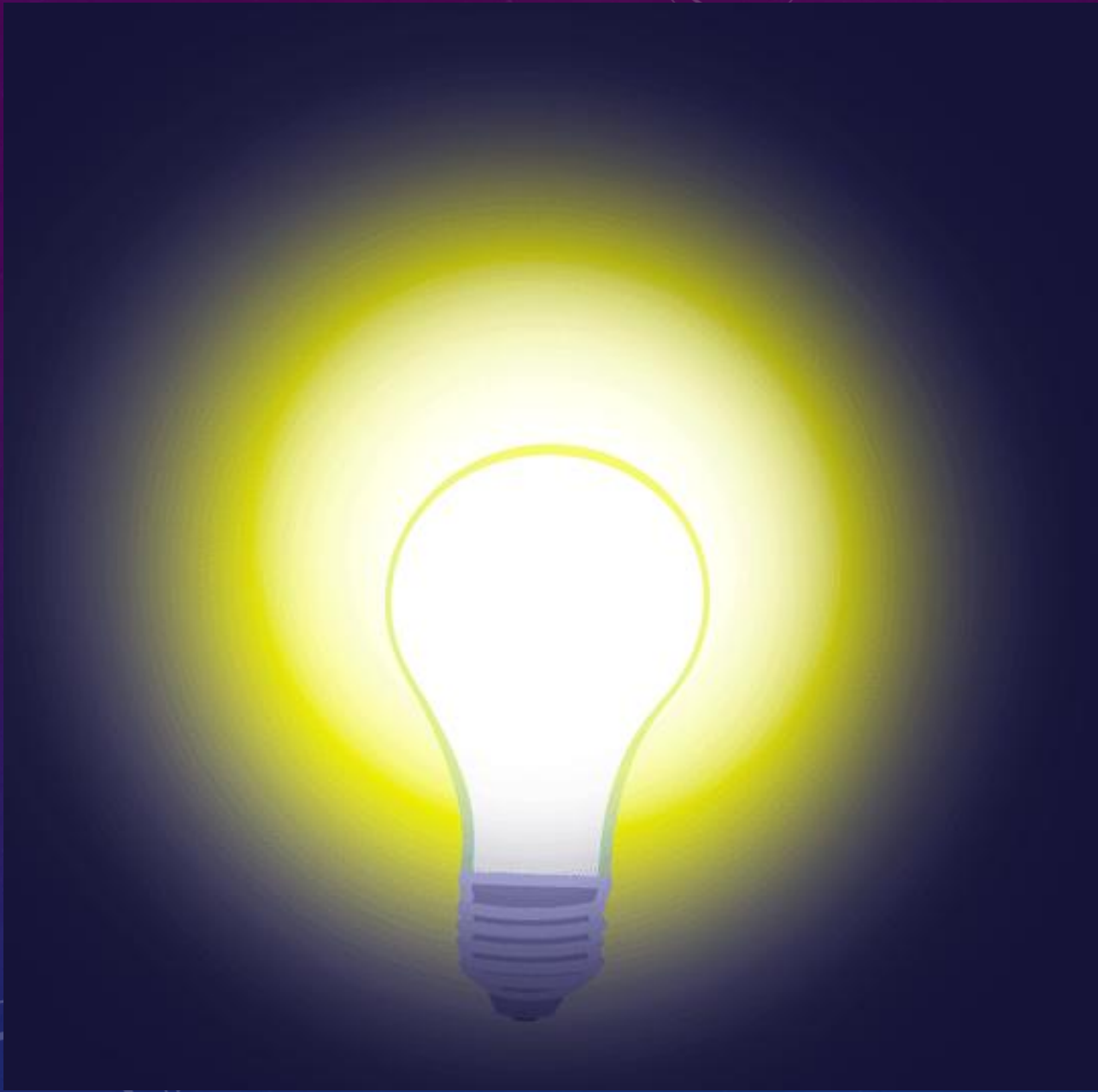
The DIM-OUT was introduced in September 1944 and meant that lighting the equivalent of moonlight could at long last be introduced.

However a full Blackout was still required if an alert was sounded.

Full lighting of streets that had not been seen since before the war was eventually switched back on in April 1945.

Symbolically, it was the illumination of the clock on the Palace of Westminster that ended the Blackout in London. This came on the 30th April 1945, 5 years and 123 days to the day from when the Blackout was introduced to Britain.





**Could you find your way  
safely around your home  
in the dark?**