

WW2 TOPIC BOX: MEET THE HOWARTH FAMILY



Blackpool
July 1935

INTRODUCTION

This is Stanley, Sarah, Albert and Grace Howarth and they are the Second World War family that we have based this topic box on. The items in the box didn't belong to them but they are all typical examples of things that they would have used in their everyday lives. Each item has been chosen especially to tell a little bit more about their story and we hope you enjoy learning more about them.

Let's start with this photograph. As you can see it was taken on a family holiday in Blackpool in 1935. Albert, the boy, was five years old and Grace was four. This means that at the start of the war in 1939 they were nine and eight. Their Dad, Stanley, was 30 when this was taken and their mum, Sarah, was 29.

At the start of the war, on the 3rd September 1939, they lived at no. 8 Lichfield Street in a place called Salford in the North West of England. This was a difficult place to live as it was close to the Manchester docks that the Germans were always trying to bomb to stop the ships bringing supplies to Manchester. For this reason, Albert and Grace were evacuated on the 5th September to a safer place called Rhyl in North Wales.

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FACT FILE: Stanley Howarth

NAME:	Stanley Howarth
AGE (IN SEPT. 1939):	34
JOB:	Foreman in clothing factory
WAR WORK:	Home Guard soldier
HOBBIES:	Too busy! (but likes watching football)

Stanley, the Dad of our family, is a very busy man! In the daytime, he is a 'foreman' in a textile factory, which means he is the boss of a lot of hard working men and women who make uniforms and parachutes for soldiers, close to the docks in a place called Trafford Park. Many people call this the 'Rag Trade' and it has been a big industry in Manchester for many years, which has the nickname 'Cottonopolis'. Because it is so important the Germans often try to drop bombs on the area meaning it is a dangerous place to live.

They can only make these things with the raw cotton and other materials that are delivered on ships from far away places like India and America, which come up through Liverpool through the Manchester Ship Canal and on to the large docks outside the factory. However the ships are arriving less and less now that the German submarines are sinking more and more of them and Stanley is getting worried as the piles of cloth get lower and lower. Stanley's job is so important that it is called a 'reserved occupation' which means he is doing very important war work and doesn't need to join the army.

In the evening though, like a lot of adults, he does extra work for what people call the 'war effort', which is the phrase used to describe everyone working together to win the war and defeat Hitler. He serves in a volunteer army called the 'Home Guard' which was formed in May 1940 by Winston Churchill to protect Britain. Here is a picture of Stanley looking very proud in his uniform.



Salford Home Guard, August 1940

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FACT FILE: Stanley Howarth (ctd..)

They wear soldier's uniforms and are being trained to do the same jobs as regular army soldiers, though a lot of them are older than the soldiers in the regular army. This can be a very difficult job because the men are often tired after work and don't have the same quality of training and equipment as regular soldiers. In fact, when they first started they had to use brush handles as pretend rifles!



learning to spot German planes, Sept 1940

Stanley's group of soldiers is organised into something called the '43rd Salford Battalion' and his favourite duty is when he is asked to observe German airplanes during air raids with his binoculars and spotting guide. It is scary work as he can't go into the shelter to protect himself but it makes him very proud to have a role in protecting his factory and home from the German bombers. Sometimes though they still get through and in December 1940 Salford was involved in

something called the 'Manchester Blitz' when many people were killed, injured, or lost their homes, including some of Stanley's friends, which made him very sad.

Still though, Stanley keeps turning up to try and protect his country and he is very pleased to be learning a new skill as a 'signaller', which means he is learning to send messages using a Morse code machine, which he thinks is a very important skill to learn.

Questions about Stanley

Easy starters

1. Where does Stanley work in the daytime?
2. What is Stanley's Home Guard unit called?
3. What is his favourite Home Guard duty?

A little harder

1. Why is it dangerous to live near the docks?
2. What does 'reserved occupation' mean?
3. Why was Stanley sad after December 1940?

What do you think?

1. What do you think it would have been like to have been Stanley, trying to do a good job in the daytime as well keeping his family safe in the Home Guard at night?
2. Which part of Stanley's life do you think he found the most difficult and which parts do you think he enjoyed the most?
3. Try and find out more about the Home Guard and what they did. Can you find out if there were any Home Guard units where you live?

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FACT FILE: Sarah Howarth

NAME:	Sarah Howarth
AGE (IN SEPT. 1939):	33
JOB:	Grocer's assistant
WAR WORK:	Air Raid Warden (Fire Guard)
HOBBIES:	Sewing and making clothes

Sarah, the mum of our family, is 33 and works in her local grocer's shop on the High Street right outside the Manchester docks. The owners of the shop are Mr and Mrs Rumsworth, who are very kind people whom she has known since she started working there straight after leaving school at the age of 15.

Mr Rumsworth and Grace also work together at night quite a lot as they are both ARP Wardens for their area. These letters mean 'Air Raid Precaution' but most people simply call them Air Raid Wardens.

They both wear black helmets with a white W on the front. Sarah hopes the war will end soon but if it doesn't she plans to train as a Chief Air Raid warden, which means she would wear a white hat and be Mr Rumsworth's boss!



Salford ARP Wardens, July 1940



People queuing outside a grocers, 1940

One of the most difficult parts of Sarah's daytime job in the shop is dealing with the new ration books that people have to carry. They started in January 1940 because of the German submarines sinking the ships which, as well as the cotton for Stanley's factory, also carry food and other items that people need to buy to live their daily lives.

As the war has gone on there have been more and more food shortages so this is the Government's plan to make sure that everything is shared out equally to everyone in the country. The way it works is that

people have a set amount of coupons in their ration book that allow them to buy just that amount of items, no matter how much money they have. So, for example, if somebody wanted to buy some butter, they are only able to buy a small amount per week using their butter coupon. Some of the other food on ration is tea, butter, milk, sweets and other items such as clothing and petrol are also rationed.

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FACT FILE: Sarah Howarth (ctd..)

Sarah's night time job as an Air Raid Warden keeps her very busy and helps to take her mind off missing her children, Albert and Grace, who have been 'evacuated' to Wales. This means they have been taken away to the countryside for their safety.

Sarah has now been an ARP warden for almost three years, since before the war started in 1938 when the government asked for volunteers to start training in case there was a war with Germany. After the first six months she was given a silver ARP badge and she wears it with great pride! (There is an example of one of these in the topic box).

She has a lot of different duties as an ARP warden, such as delivering and fitting gas masks; giving people information about what to do in an air raid; sounding the siren and helping people into shelters among many other important duties. However, recently she has had special training with her friend Mildred to be a team of 'Fire Guards' on the docks during air raids, to put out the fires caused by German incendiary bombs as they fall on the ships and warehouses.

For this job she uses a special water pump called a 'stirrup pump' that Mildred pumps while Sarah squirts the hose at the flames. Both her and Mildred had to do a lot of training for this job that involved lying low to the ground to avoid the smoke and using different attachments for the front of the hosepipe for different situations.

This is a very dangerous job as the Germans want to destroy the docks and sometimes drop many hundreds of their 'firebomb fritz' bombs at one time to try and burn them down, so Sarah, Mildred and the other fire guard teams are extremely busy during the worst raids.



A WW2 Fire Guard using
a stirrup pump

Questions about Sarah

Easy starters

1. Where does Sarah work in the daytime?
2. What does 'ARP' mean?
3. What was Sarah given after six months that made her very proud?

A little harder

1. What special training has Sarah just had with her friend Mildred?
2. What is Sarah plan to do that might one day make her Mr Rumsworth's boss?

What do you think?

1. What do you think it would have been like to have been Sarah, working in such a dangerous job at night after working hard all day in the shop?
2. How would you feel about having to share food out to people using the ration books, even if they were hungry?
3. Sarah's hobby before the war was making clothes but now she doesn't have the time. How would you feel if you had to give up your hobbies? Is there any that you think would be easy or hard to give up?