Of my many wartime memories rationing is one which is perhaps more difficult to recall. It has often been said that we were protected by parents who unknown to us themselves made sacrifices to ensure that we did not go without. Again those were the days, long before fast food, when home cooking really meant that and by prudent housekeeping and good old-fashioned recipes we were still able to have tasty meals. Living near school we always came home to dinner. Children of today are amazed to hear that we finished at 12 o'clock and went back at a quarter to two! Time for a good dinner of rabbit stew - with always plenty of homegrown vegetables from my fathers allotment. There was still some meat (apparently was not rationed)such as pigs heads, trotters, tails, hearts, liver, etc., which mum would make up into tasty meals; in fact all parts of the pig except the squeal! as we were told. A basin of brawn provided good meals and also tripe and onions. I always remember our Sunday dinner - which was traditional roast. No doubt the ration was saved up very carefuly for the weekend. On Mondays we always came home to cold meat, potatoes and boiled onions, followed by rice pudding. This was a 'washing day' meal. Fish was also available and in those days was still sold from the marble slabs at the local fishmongers. Spratts (we had to cut off their heads before we ate them) and kippers toasted in front of the open fire, all provided variety. In some respects it sounds good but again this was thanks to our mums and dads and there is no doubt times were very bad. The ration book certainly played a very important part in our lives. One of my earliest memories was the ward sister of the local hospital saying to my mother 'Have you got his ration book' With the war only a few months old I had just been taken into hospital by our kindly Doctor Kingston - a gentleman and real family friend. No modern ambulance service then - the local green grocer who operated the town's ambulance was either busy in his shop or out on another call - but thats another story, I am digressing. The local food office was another part of the ration book story - and we would go with my mum to the local food office to register for the various shops where we could then buy food for the next period. Once registered that was your shop - perhaps the local corner shop for say sugar and the Co-op down the road for eggs, bacon and butter. Clothes was of course always stricly rationed and perhaps that it why at Easter we always proudly went to show the old lady next door our new suits and shoes. It was a queston of saving up the coupons and pennies - the latter probably from the co-op divi. Sweets were always in very short supply - except at Christmas. This was because from about the end of September we went without and saved up our coupons for the festive season. Christmas also meant the once a year treat of a roast chicken, but again reared on the small patch of garden at the rear of our house. Killed by dad, then plucked and drawn by mum in the back scullery. There seemed to be a plentiful supply of eggs - either from our back garden or a friendly local farmer - but this was during the summer and the eggs were preserved for winter days in a very large earthenware vessel - in some form of jelly. No fridges in those days but the stone floor in the larder served the same purpose. Otherwise it was dried egg - for cooking and a form of scrambled egg. Tea time was a little more sparse - bread and butter - with a small scraping of jam. Probably this was supplemented with home made cakes - depending on the ration. What about breakfast? If we were lucky we had some cornflakes - or shredded wheat, but often it was what we called milk sop. Bread soaked in hot milk with a spoonful of sugar. Bananas and oranges were unknown but our next door neighbour had a very large apple tree, and the cooking applies which fell into our yard were not wasted. Changing the subject again sometimes at teatime another treat was ham sandwiches! A welcomed change from bread and jam. Towards the end of the war our house was extended which meant more furniture - not new. At least one shop went over to second hand furniture - we certainly did not quality for new.