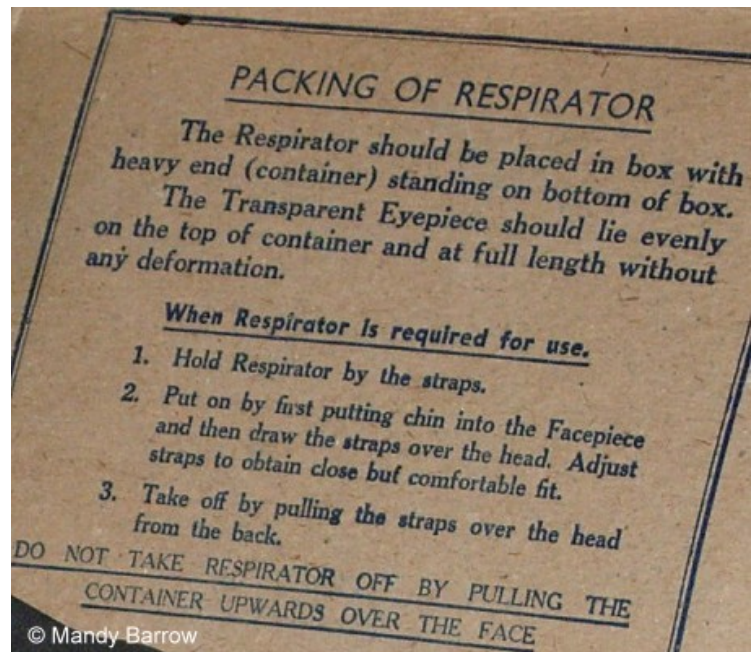


Gasmasks in WW2

By September 1939, some 38 million gas masks had been given out, house to house, to families. They were never to be needed. Everyone in Britain was given a gas mask in a cardboard box, to protect them from gas bombs, which could be dropped during air raids.

Gas had been used a great deal in the First World War and many soldiers had died or been injured in gas attacks. Mustard gas was the deadliest of all the poisonous chemicals used during World War I. It was almost odourless (could not be smelt easily) and took 12 hours to take effect. It was so powerful that only small amounts needed to be added to weapons like high explosive shells to have devastating effects.



What were Gasmasks like to wear?

The masks were made of black rubber, which was very hot and smelly. It was difficult to breathe when wearing a gas mask. When you breathed in the air was sucked through the filter to take out the gas. When you breathed out the whole mask was pushed away from your face to let the air out. The smell of the rubber and disinfectant made some people feel sick.

How were people warned about a pending Gas attack?

The Air raid Warden's would carry out special rattle which would be used to warn people about a possible gas attack.

Children had to take regular gas drills at school. They found these drills hard to take seriously, especially when they discovered blowing out through the rubber made 'rude' noises!

There were lots of different kinds of Gas masks invented. There were ones for adults, Mickey-Mouse ones for children and even Gas masks for babies!

Thankfully, there was never a gas attack witnessed in Britain during WW2.



OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY

GAS ATTACK

HOW TO PUT ON YOUR GAS MASK

Always keep your gas mask with you – day and night. Learn to put it on quickly.

Practise wearing it.



1. Hold your breath. 2. Hold mask in front of face, with thumbs inside straps.
3. Thrust chin well forward into mask, pull straps over head as far as they will go.
4. Run finger round face-piece taking care head-straps are not twisted.

IF THE GAS RATTLES SOUND



1. Hold your breath. Put on mask wherever you are. Close window.

2. If out of doors, take off hat, put on your mask. Turn up collar.

3. Put on gloves or keep hands in pockets. Take cover in nearest building.

IF YOU GET GASSED

BY VAPOUR GAS

Keep your gas mask on even if you feel discomfort
If discomfort continues go to First Aid Post

BY LIQUID or BLISTER GAS

1

Dab, but *don't rub* the splash with handkerchief. Then destroy handkerchief.

2

Rub No. 2 Ointment well into place.

*(Buy a 6d. jar now from any chemist).
In emergency chemists supply Bleach Cream free.*

3

If you can't get Ointment or Cream within 5 minutes wash place with soap and warm water

4

Take off at once any garment splashed with gas.