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978-1-107-09935-7 - Waste into Weapons: Recycling in Britain during the Second World War

Peter Thorsheim

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Waste into Weapons

During the Second World War, the United Kingdom faced severe shortages of many essential raw materials. To keep its armaments factories running, the British government enlisted millions of people in efforts to recycle a wide range of materials for use in munitions production. Recycling not only supplied British factories with much-needed raw materials but it also played a key role in the efforts of the British government to maintain the morale of its citizens, to secure billions of dollars in Lend-Lease aid from the United States, and even to uncover foreign intelligence. However, Britain's wartime recycling campaign came at a cost: it consumed many items that would never have been destroyed under normal circumstances, including significant parts of the nation's cultural heritage. Based on extensive archival research, Peter Thorsheim examines the relationship between armaments production, civil liberties, cultural preservation, and diplomacy, making *Waste into Weapons* the first in-depth history of twentieth-century recycling in Britain.

Peter Thorsheim is Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

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*Dedicated to my parents,
Howard and Julie Thorsheim*

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
Introduction	I
PART I: BEATING PLOWSHARES INTO SWORDS	
1 Salvage in Times of Peace and War	13
2 Persuasion and Its Limits	34
3 Britain's Darkest Hour	54
4 Private Enterprise and the Public Good	75
PART II: ALLIANCES	
5 Lend-Lease	101
6 Waste Becomes a Crime	132
PART III: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES	
7 The Built Environment	159
8 Wasting Paper	180
9 Requisition	202
10 Victory and Postwar	232
Conclusion	256
<i>Bibliography</i>	263
<i>Index</i>	279

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978-1-107-09935-7 - Waste into Weapons: Recycling in Britain during the Second World War

Peter Thorsheim

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Figures

1	Paper recycled as percentage of paper consumed in the United Kingdom, 1939–55	<i>page</i> 49
2	“Up Housewives and at ‘Em!”	63
3	Aluminum salvage	67
4	Salvaging kitchen waste	72
5	“Anti-Waste Drive”	83
6	Boy Scouts carry paper to salvage depot	87
7	Royal visit to municipal salvage works	91
8	“Put Out More Salvage for More Munitions”	94
9	Salvage exhibition in Westminster	95
10	“What Happens to Lend-Lease Sent to Britain”	109
11	Beaverbrook visits Washington	112
12	Stettinius confers with Roosevelt	120
13	Imports of iron and steel scrap to the United Kingdom, 1938–45	123
14	The global reach of Britain’s wartime salvage efforts	152
15	Iron and steel scrap purchased within the United Kingdom, 1938–45	163
16	Using brute force to remove railings	171
17	Turning paper into pulp	189
18	Women sorting waste paper	191
19	“Waste into Weapons”	194
20	“How Waste Materials Can Help in the Building of a Bomber”	195
21	Soviet ambassador cuts railings of embassy	213

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978-1-107-09935-7 - Waste into Weapons: Recycling in Britain during the Second World War

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Tables

1 Ministry of Supply	<i>page 30</i>
2 Salvage Departments	43
3 Works Departments	135
4 Inputs of Scrap to the UK Steel Industry	162
5 Materials Salvaged by Local Authorities	255

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Excerpt

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