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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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