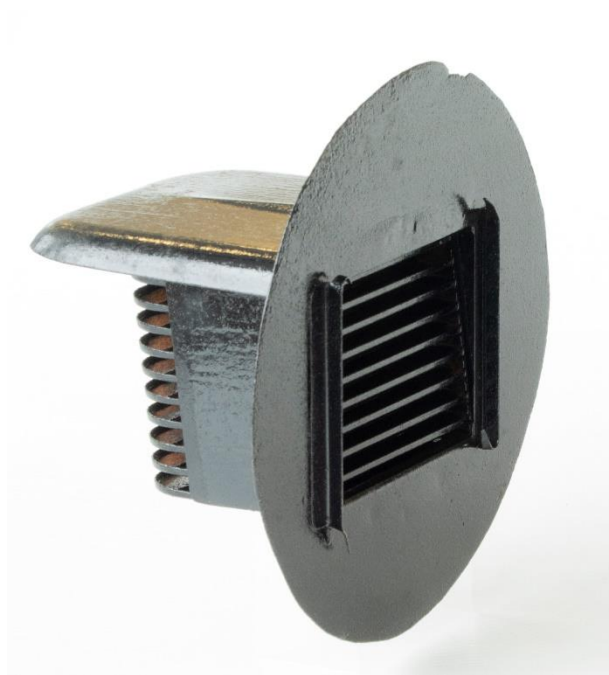


WW2 Headlight Mask

By Roy Fletcher

Within days of the Second World War being declared on the 1st September 1939, the police issued an order regarding the control of vehicle lights. Part of the regulation informed vehicle users that “no direct light can be visible” and that “illumination from the lamp cannot exceed 0.006 foot candle at any point within the vehicle at a distance of 4 feet from the lamp”. How many drivers understood this regulation is open to conjecture!

To assist vehicle owners to comply, the police gave details on how to create a suitable cover. The headlight had to be completely covered bar a single horizontal slot of 3/8” (1cm) just below the bulb. A projective shroud then had to cover the slot.



Other regulations regarding the lights on vehicles were:-

- Lights illuminating the rear registration plate not permitted
- All other windows or side panels in light units to be completely obscured
- Matte white paint applied to the edges of wings, edges of the running boards, and to the bumpers - this seems to be often ignored
- Internal lights not permitted
- Directional indicators (most of which would of been of the fold-out trafficator type), if fitted and used, to be masked so the light is only visible through a slot an 1/8 inch (3mm) wide, or an arrow comprising of three lines each an 1/8th inch (3mm) wide.

Not wishing to miss an opportunity, companies started retailing headlight shields. An advert dated 19th September has been seen advertising Dymlite shields for 2 shillings (10p).

What the entrepreneurial companies couldn't have foreseen was that towards the end of September the Government announced changes to the requirements. The Government introduced the three slot mask and motorists had to comply. We can only assume that the Dymlite price plummeted.

Notwithstanding, companies still produced alternatives to the Government version. It took the Government until March 1940 to accept their versions. An example of one of these masks is on display in the Rhodes Arts Complex.

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Researched and written by Roy Fletcher.

Roy has been a volunteer at the museum for six years, spending his time cataloguing the museum's collection. Roy has an interest in the local history, particularly the last 200 years.