During World War 2, the blackout was a nationwide effort to turn off all lights in towns and cities. It was devised as a defence against German bombers, so they could not be guided by the lights.

The blackout was ordered two days before war broke out. London and other large British towns and cities had a blackout, as well as cities in Germany, France and other European countries.

Each home was given enough blackout material, which was usually a dark cotton fabric. Putting up and taking down the material quickly became a boring and unwanted daily task for most households.

Windows were covered in the dark material. Car headlamps were also blacked out, causing many accidents, and people were not allowed to smoke cigarettes or cigars outdoors.

Many small shops had to have an extra door fitted, to stop light from showing when people came in and out of the shop. Some large factories with glass roofs had to paint their entire roof black.

Because of the risk of car accidents in the dark, the speed limit was reduced to 20 mph. To help drivers and pedestrians, white lines were painted on roads, which are still there today.

The blackout offered some protection against the Blitz, the bombing of Britain that began in 1940..

The blackout was enforced by Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens, who made sure that no light could be seen from buildings. There were heavy fines for anyone who did not follow the rules.

In coastal areas, ships were also blacked out to prevent them from being seen against the shore. It made them less of an obvious target for German submarines.