



## A 1950s Housewife

*Sheila Hardy*

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Getting married in the 1950s was quite a different experience to how it is today. After the independence of the wartime years, women now had to leave their jobs when they married and support their husband by creating a spotless home, delicious meals and an inviting bedroom. From ingenious cleaning tips, ration-book recipes and home decor inspiration, the homemaking methods of the 1950s give a hilarious and poignant insight into the lives of women in that decade. In A 1950s Housewife, author, wife, mother and grandmother Sheila Hardy collects heart-warming personal anecdotes from those women, many of whom are now in their eighties, who embarked on married life during this fascinating post-war period and provides a heart-warming trip down memory lane for any wife or child of the 1950s.

## A 1950s Housewife Details

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Author : Sheila Hardy

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## From Reader Review A 1950s Housewife for online ebook

### Jacquie Jerrard says

#### Not enough

I was disappointed with this book. It wasn't a good source for finding out about the poorer classes . It seemed to be aimed at the middle class.

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### Patricia O'Brien says

There's a lot of detail in here about really quite mundane things and reading three ladies take on what they had in their 'bottom drawer' can be a bit dull. However, as a chronicle of the times and a window on just how much things have changed, it is fascinating and in parts, very jolly and good fun. One thing for sure, if you think we have austerity now, you can think again!

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### Mme LionHead says

I requested this book from the library because I am very intrigued by people's lives in the 50s. I foolishly romanticize about the old-fashioned way of life from a postmodern perspective. As well, my own belief towards the benefits of having more defined and traditional gender roles (with conditions of course) makes me want to give this book a read.

This book is not quite what I have expected. I was expecting it to be more instructional and filled with tips and how-tos from the 50s. Instead, Sheila Hardy presents the material in a story-telling kind of descriptive way. She focuses on the period in an average young woman's life between finishing her education to being married and to getting ready to start a family. Hardy covers topics on dating, working, wedding planning, vacation choices, living arrangements and homemaking, daily routines, fashion, health and beauty, hobbies, etc. I find it interesting to gain realistic perspectives on lives of women back in that era (1950s Britain). For example, I was surprised to learn that most young middle-class women, ones who hadn't have any children, would stay in the work force in order to supplement their husbands' income.

Certain parts of the book remind me just how industrious and frugal women were back in the day. Since their lives were dictated by the post war economy, it was not an option to be wasteful. Young women back then dreamed of (and worked very hard towards) getting a washing machine or a refrigerator. For me, there is something about the practice of living simply and resourfully that makes me wish (very, very, very naively) that I could live in such a time period.

In general, this is an enjoyable book. It didn't take me too long to finish. It is written in very plain language, almost conversational. The content flows quite smoothly from one subject to the next, following either the chronological order or an expected daily schedule. I think people who might be reminiscence of the post war era or people who are intrigued specifically by women's lives back then, would enjoy this book as well. I give the book 2.5 stars (3 on goodreads).

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## Bonnie says

Interesting but not exactly what I expected

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## Iset says

I have to admit I picked this book up out of curiosity more than anything else. I didn't come into it totally ignorant – I may be a millennial, but time well spent with grandparents elucidated many of the mysteries of 'what was it like in the olden days'. Yes, that was the question my child self posed to my no doubt bemused grandparents. Thus, I primarily picked the book up for two reasons. First – nostalgia of visits to grandsires and their enthralling tales of days gone by. Second – what aspects hadn't they told me about?

If you're looking for a well-referenced history textbook, you won't find it here. This isn't a footnoted academic study. Rather, the author has compiled the accounts and anecdotes of numerous unnamed contemporaries to create a pastiche look at what life was generally like for the young married woman of the 1950s. And it's worth noting that the book looks specifically at 1950s Britain – ideal for my purposes, but others hoping to get a look at 1950s America may want to think again.

For the most part, it was a trip down memory lane for me – I was well aware of the appliances the 1950s lacked, the routine of the average housewife, the social expectations. But once in a while a fact slipped through that I hadn't known about before; such as single beds being as small as 2'6" wide (I had a 3'6" bed growing up) and doubles for the married couple usually came in at just 4' wide. There was also a bit about the ubiquitousness of brightly coloured high heels in a style that provoked terrible corns and bunions – and somehow, even though high heels and dress codes are currently a hot topic in Britain at time of writing this review, I never connected the poor condition of my grandmother's feet with 1950s rage for high heels. As for other subjects which my grandparents never mentioned to me, I've seen in a lot of 1940s and 1950s set films of recent years an unusual trend of suggesting that much more shenanigans went on behind closed doors than our prior view of the conservative inhabitants of the era, and questioned whether or not this new trend of a secretly footloose 50s was correct. Well, the book certainly elucidates just how little many brides-to-be knew before their marriages, and the extreme difficulty in obtaining any sort of advice or planning materials. Perhaps most interestingly of all, the book highlights how many of today's socially accepted attitudes and ways of doing things had their germination in the 1950s – everything from divorce law to the fully fitted kitchen, women wearing trousers to the 'waste not, want not' attitude combined with new labour saving devices prompting the rise in modern obesity.

**7 out of 10**

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## Sonya Heaney says

Originally posted [HERE](#) .

What an interesting, comprehensive book this is!

Do not be fooled by the oh-so cutesy packaging; this isn't one of those lifestyle guides conservative ladies pass around during Bible study. What it is is a spectacularly well-researched, extremely detailed look at life

in 1950s England. That is **life** in general, though there is an emphasis on the life of young women just getting started in their marriages.

Based on many personal accounts from volunteer contributors, the author has constructed a fascinating book that doesn't paint anything perfectly or otherwise. You'll hear as much about the hardships as the parts everyone likes to reminisce about. The detail that might become tedious in lesser hands is engrossing here. You'll know how much things cost and who could afford them, the different things people did for fun, the different modes of transportation, the food that was eaten. The details on housework are terrifying. Even though I've heard many stories from family members, seeing it all put together in this book adds up to an exhausting explanation as to why there wasn't an obesity problem in the 1950s!

*A 1950s Housewife* makes me think the British had it harder in the 1950s than the average Australian or American, thanks to the Second World War.

This is an eye-opener for anyone who tends to be delusional about "how much better" things were in the past, and is a book I'd highly recommend for anyone with an interest in this era.

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### **Tricia Toney says**

A fascinating look at an era.

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### **Caroline says**

Easy to read and very interesting about the lives of British wives in the 1950's. I've read many American accounts of the period, but as they didn't have to deal with housing shortages, food rationing, and rebuilding a country, I now realize the British wife had quite a few more challenges in her life.

After reading this, I am even more appreciative of the women's movement. And tights. And not wearing a girdle.

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### **Lynne Hivick says**

Interesting look at womens life in a time period often neglected by history books. I would like reading about the same subject from an American point of view.

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### **The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says**

Interesting take on British housewives in the 1950s, with some useful background on how and where "nice girls met nice guys" and then fulfilled The Dream by getting married.

Much of this fairly short work can be interpolated onto Middle America--or indeed most of America--during the same period without too great an effort. And that's scary, I think: that back in a day I can remember perfectly women were expected to lead--and in fact led--such stultifying and circumscribed lives. But my

mother thought it was all just so peachy that she wanted the same life for me: "Go to college, dear, join a sorority, major in primary education, and find a husband. Teach children for a couple of years until you have children of your own."

Thanks be to all that is holy--or unholy--I refused to follow that awful cycle.

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### **Anna Zollinger says**

First and foremost, if you are an American Housewife interested in American Culture, dating, and related topics involving this era? I am afraid to say that this book probably won't entirely be what you are looking for. It is ultimately useless to the woman looking for education on the culture and customs of that era in our own country. The book is certainly not completely useless, however, especially if you have a tendency to consume anything and everything about that era regardless of its country of origin... But it is still written from a British standpoint, and while it alludes to America's state in some portions many things were not the same across the ocean.

That being said, I do thoroughly enjoy the fact that this book covers more than just the Housewife herself. It covers everything; juxtaposing pre war culture against in war culture and even post war culture. As a result, the book gives you a miraculously detailed idea of how society was affected by and functioned in all areas of life which spanned the course of our favorite vintage era.

One of the greatest things about this book, though, is that it was written not by Historians, but by someone who lived through it first hand; the author uses not only her first hand accounts and experiences to illustrate their everyday life, but also the stories and experiences of other women who also lived through it as well. This gives you a marvelous peek into the authentic- not speculative or romanticized- life of a 1950's Housewife in Britain. Even if it is not oriented on American culture, it is still truly is a breathtaking historical account for someone interested in the early 1940's to the mid 1960's.

The only issue I really had with the book was that I did find it oddly structured. I feel that it jumps around too much from era to era and subject to subject even- within the same chapter. It does this in such a manner that makes it difficult to read and follow along in a true chronological or even historical order. I would have been much happier if the chapters were structured chronologically as opposed to being as flighty as they were. I do believe that this would have helped the readability and understandability immensely- as well as better illustrate the pre, in, and post war differences.

Regardless, it was humorously written and certainly educational and eye opening.

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### **Sue says**

A really good account of life in my childhood, which brought back so many memories. It is incredible how much life has changed since the 1950's and I so enjoyed reading about it. A book I would read again.

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### **Laura says**

I really enjoyed this book. It was a straightforward, yet interesting look at the British 1950's housewife.

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Good read!

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### **Donna says**

A nice little book that describes the life of a 1950s housewife in ENGLAND. It was interesting partly to see how different things were in England after the war relative to the US, where rationing was still not a part of life anymore. It was a well done snapshot of time and place that is a good contribution to that literature.

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### **Laura-Anne Wright says**

#### **Fun trip back in time**

I love the period of the 1950s so this was a fun read all about the every day life of a woman, wife and mother in those days. Quite a bit of fun information on housekeeping, meal planning, fashion, and leisure of the era.

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