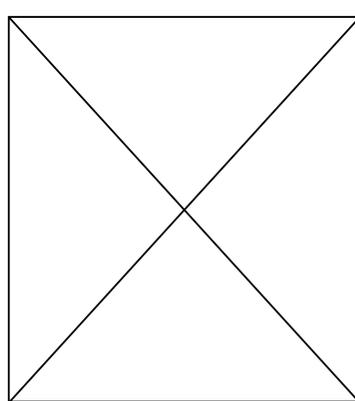


Women's Land Army (WLA) - "The Forgotten Army...."

Life as a Land Girl

The Women's Land Army was made up of girls from every walk of life. Posters of smiling girls bathing in glorious sunshine and open fields covered the fact that the WLA often presented raw recruits (many from industrial towns) with gruelling hard work and monotony. Homesickness was common as many of the girls had never been away from their parents for long periods. This was particularly true of girls that stayed in private billets. The girls that stayed in local hostels often told a different story and were more settled as they were grouped together. However despite all this there was a great sense of camaraderie amongst the girls who ultimately made life long friends.

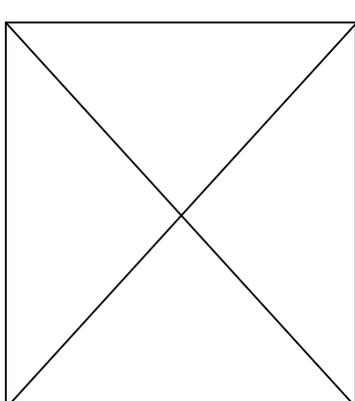


Origins

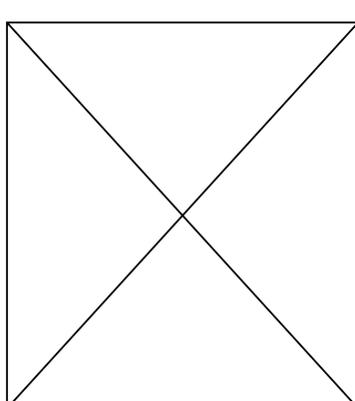
The Women's Land Army, often referred to as "The Forgotten Army", was actually formed in 1917 by Roland Prothero, the then Minister for Agriculture. The Great War had seen food supplies dwindle and saw the creation of the Women's Land Army (WLA). The WLA was reformed in June 1939 first asking for volunteers and later by conscription with numbers totalling 80,000 by 1944.

Work and Conditions

Girls had to adjust to land army life very quickly and erratic love lives, resentments and bad behaviour all had to be contained. To this end representatives for each County had to be elected. Each county had its organising secretary and local representative. The rep had to ensure that all the girls within their area were content but disciplined. The rep in turn reported to the organising secretary directly who saw that all conditions of employment were being met. It is important to remember that the WLA was not a military organisation in any way, which was often forgotten by government.



PICTURE: Land Girls hay bundling



PICTURE: Land Girls busy gathering sprouts

Back to the land, we must all lend a hand.

To the farms and the fields we must go.

There's a job to be done,

Though we can't fire a gun

We can still do our bit with the hoe...

Back to the land, with its clay and its sand,

Its granite and gravel and grit,

You grow barley and wheat

And potatoes to eat

To make sure that the nation keeps fit...

We will tell you once more

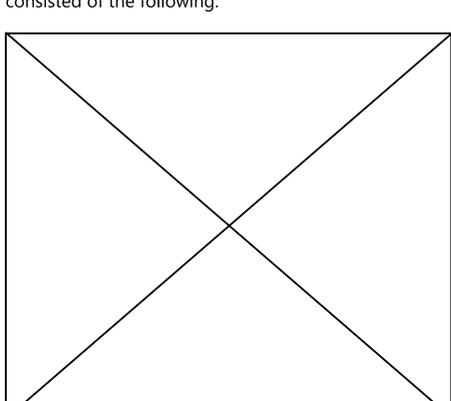
You can help win the war

If you come with us - back to the land

The Women's Land Army Song

Uniforms

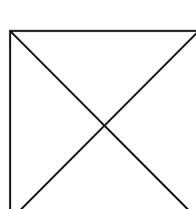
Some girls were attracted to the uniform, others described it as awful! Many agreed that the aertex shirts were scratchy and wearing a tie never seemed to work. The uniforms were normally far too big and breeches had to be taken in. However, resourceful girls normally did their own tailoring and made a good job of improving their uniforms. The uniforms normally consisted of the following:



- **2 short sleeved shirts**
- **1 green pullover**
- **2 pairs of socks**
- **1 pair of shoes**
- **1 bib and brace overall**
- **1 hat**
- **1 pair of rubber boots**
- **1 long (very thin!) Mackintosh for the winter**

Evenings Out

Working long hours the Land Girls often looked forward to the free time they were given. Entertainment often came in the form of dances or picture shows in the local village hall. Evenings were also spent writing letters home or reading novels. The local village halls were not always 'local' and girls sometimes had to walk 2 or 3 miles to get there. Transport was not always on offer and it meant a long walk home for most. It was only the girls that stayed in the hostels that might be lucky in guaranteeing some kind of transport home. However to others just a hot bath seemed like heaven after a tiring day toiling!



PAGE LINKS

- Air Raid Shelters
- Evacuees
- Squander Bug
- Blackout
- Home Guard
- WWS
- Careless Talk
- Land Girls
- Other WW2 Websites
- Dig for Victory
- Rationing

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