

Recruiting poster for the Women's Land Army in World War Two, 1939-1945



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The Women's Land Army was set up in June 1939 and by September it had over 1,000 members. By 1941, its numbers had risen to 20,000 and, at its peak in 1943, over 80,000 women classed themselves as 'Land Girls'. Numbers did not rise after that, as women were needed to make aircraft and were encouraged to take up factory work instead.

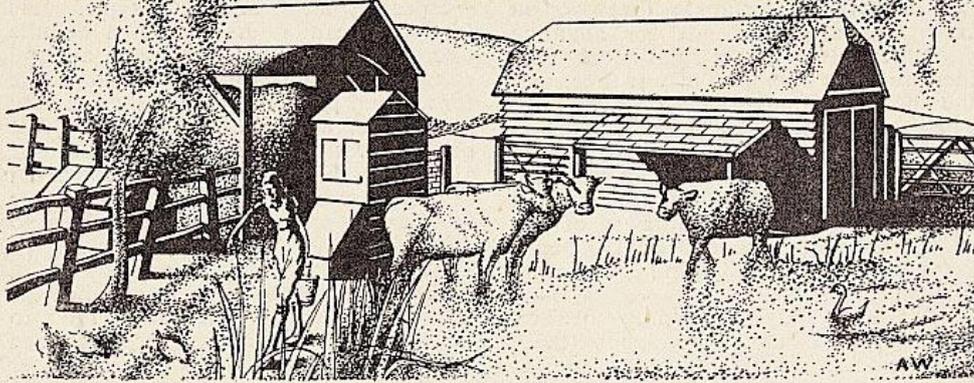
Women joined the Land Army from all backgrounds, a third coming from London and other large cities. Farm work was hard, and the women did all sorts of jobs including hoeing, ploughing, hedging, turning hay, lifting potatoes, threshing, lambing and

looking after poultry. A thousand women were employed as rat catchers. Six thousand women worked in the Timber Corps, felling trees and running sawmills. About a quarter were employed in milking and general farm work.

The Women's Land Army had a uniform - green jerseys, brown breeches, brown felt hats and khaki overcoats. However, the Land Army was not a military force and many women did not wear the uniform. Some women lived in hostels but most lived on individual farms. Conditions were often poor and pay was low but many women enjoyed the work. The Women's Land Army remained in existence until 1950.

- 1 Why did the government want women to join the Women's Land Army?
- 2 Do you have any comments about the way this poster is designed? For example do you think it provides a truthful picture of work on the land?
- 3 Would you have wanted to work as part of the Land Army? Which job would you have liked least eg rat catcher?

THE LAND GIRL



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NOW WE ARE THREE

WITH this issue the Land Girl celebrates its third birthday. The W.L.A. is now about ten times the size it was when the magazine started and it is certainly ten times as much appreciated. It plays, in fact, an important part in our national achievement of producing at home two out of every three meals we eat. That still leaves forty-seven million meals a day, however, to be brought in from overseas.

Our emotional experiences of the last three years have been very wearying. Backs to the wall and a sense of desperate urgency after Dunkirk, stolid endurance through the blitzes, anxious preparations for invasion, elation and disappointment about Libya, dismay over Malay, delight in a North African victory—and a gradual, relieved conviction that the tide had turned at last.

Three years ago our certainty that, despite all the evidence, we would win the war was founded on the failure of the man in the street to believe in the possibility of defeat. No matter what happened or what it cost, Britons never, never, never would be slaves.

Our belief in victory has much more foundation in fact now, but that carries its own danger. The Germans thought they had victory in their pocket in 1940, and that is a lesson for all who run to read. Oddly enough, it is very much more difficult when you are winning than when you are losing, to go on working your hardest, grumbling least and accepting all the inconveniences and injustices that come your way. Everyone is overtired and overworked and the Land Army in particular has won a nice comfortable bed of laurels on which it is very tempting to rest. But there can't be any rest for us until we are producing those forty-seven million meals a day which our ships now have to bring, instead of carrying men and munitions for the Second Front.

M.A.P.

How does this article describe the attitude of Britons to the war?

Why was the land army so important to the war effort?

To All Land Girls

FROM AN ADMIRER OF THEIR WORK.

I saw a Land Girl working
Alone in an open field.
Her hard, once elegant, hands
A stalwart hoe did wield.
Her back was bent as she slew the weeds
That spoiled the potatoes' growth;
She never wilted, she never paused,
She had taken her silent oath.

At last the day was nearly done,
The sun was sinking low;
She gathered up her jacket
Then slowly cleaned her hoe.
She passed the chair where I sat
(I am feeble in body and sight).
She smiled at me as she said:
"Been hot to-day. Good-night."

We hear the valiant deeds of our men in
"furrin parts,"
Deeds which bring the tears to our eyes, a
glow of pride to our hearts—
But when the war is over and peace at last
restored,
I shall always remember the Land Girl, who
made her hoe her sword.

- 1 Who do you think is the author of this poem? What text in the poem tells you that?
- 2 What is the message the poem is trying to convey?
- 3 Write your own poem to describe the women who fought in the war.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,
WOMEN'S LAND ARMY,
BALCOMBE PLACE,
BALCOMBE,
HATFIELD HEATH,
SUSSEX.

W.L.A. C.153

11th June, 1943.

Dear Madam,

Discussions have been taking place between the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Labour about employment conditions for the Women's Land Army and it has been decided that some further standardisation of conditions is desirable. New decisions have accordingly been reached which affect Women's Land Army wages, maintenance, training arrangements and leave. These decisions will become immediately effective and are now explained in this letter.

WAGES

On June 20th new minimum rates of wages for women agricultural workers fixed by the Agricultural Wages Board in consultation with the various Agricultural Wages Committees will become operative. These minimum rates are related to the principle of a guaranteed weekly minimum wage of 45s., for women of 18 years of age and over and of 30s. for women between 17 and 18 years of age, for a summer employment week of 50 hours and a winter employment week of 48 hours.* Hours worked above 50 in summer and above 48 in winter (or such lesser weekly number as is laid down for the five excepted areas referred to in the footnote below) will be paid for at the new minimum hourly overtime rates for women of 18 and over which are not less than 1s. 1d. to apply to five weekdays, and 1s. 4d. to apply to the weekly short-day, to Sundays and to public holidays (11d. and 1s. 1¹/₂d. in the case of women between 17 and 18 years of age). Where minimum wage rates or overtime rates for a particular county are fixed above the new minimum rates adopted as a principle, then the county minimum rates must legally be paid.

- 1 What style is this piece of writing, eg story, diary?
- 2 How much were women aged 17 and 18 paid?
- 3 How much more were women over 18 paid and why do you think that was?
- 4 Who do you think the author of this letter was?