

the story of wooler hostel

the Alice Stevenson ROOM



Alice Stevenson

Alice Stevenson was born at Wooperton, where her father worked as a woodman on the Wooperton Estate. At the outbreak of WWII she wanted to join the WAAFs but her fiancé had said "I might never see you again!" So she joined the W.L.A. and was recruited to work at Roseden Farm by Mr Joe Walton, just south of Wooler.



She was 19 years old at that time.

She worked a 12 hour day, from 6.00am until 6.00pm with one hour for lunch, for which she went home, plus a 10 minute break in the morning and afternoon.

The work undertaken: "Everything"! This included stacking hay into 'pikes', assisting with threshing, 'stooking' corn sheaves, singling turnips, etc.

Her family had a pig or two. She recalls one a year being killed, always when the weather was cold and frosty – never when the weather was hot. The other would be sold. The family also had their own hens. Despite food rationing people living on a farm were better off with hens to provide eggs and chicken and cows producing milk from which butter and cheese could be made. And of course there were ample supplies of home grown fruit and vegetables.

Alice had time off from midday on Saturdays when she went to stay at the Hostel in Wooler. She had become friends with several of the girls there because they came to work at the farm at Roseden. Another girl from Ilderton walked to work there.

She remembers 'kern' dances at Ilderton – a barn dance in a granary with cattle housed underneath and a reading room, in a wooden hut.

Alice recalls several Italian prisoners of war who were housed in a cottage and able to speak broken English. Dominico, featured in the photograph below, acted as cook.

The farm employed four W.L.A. girls; she recalls a weekly wage of £4 paid in cash. The farm had a steward and 2 elderly shepherds who were not called up for service. The farm used pairs of horses to work in the fields as well as tractors.

Alice spent 4½ years in the W.L.A. until she married at 24 years of age.

She "met such a lot of people" whom she would have not otherwise met city girls from Newcastle with their tales of a different lifestyle.

She "... enjoyed every minute of it. Those were good days!"

Pictured below (from left to right): Martha ?, Betty Kennedy, Dominico (Italian POW) the cook, Alice Stevenson, Mable Dodds. All the other young women were from Newcastle and lived at the hostel.

