

the story of wooler hostel

the Eileen Slater ROOM



Clockwise from top left:
Pat Lanaghan, Agnes Perret, Hetha Bruce
and Eileen Slater.



Eileen Slater (née Black) joined the W.L.A. post war, entering the organisation on 19th November 1946 and serving two years until 21st November 1948, when she married. The necessity of the country to produce its own food, with a reduced male work force, remained for some years after the war ended. Rationing continued into the 1950s.

Below:
Evacuees from Tyneside arriving at the
Archbold Hall, 1939.

Eileen's introduction to Northumberland began when she and a friend visited Lowick for a holiday. The idea of working in this area, and on the land, appealed to her and she volunteered. She resided at the Wooler hostel and spent much of her time working at Barmoor South Moor Farm. She recalls her first job being shawing turnips. This work caused her hands to become so badly blistered that she was unable to continue with work. Her mother tried to persuade her to give up and return to the city but the friends she had made influenced her to stay.

She enjoyed life at the hostel and recalls cooked breakfasts, sandwich lunches (although she was sometimes invited into a cottage for a cooked lunch) and a hot meal back 'home' in the evening. Eileen recalls a variety of vegetables which were grown in the hostel garden including Brussel sprouts. These she inspected closely, on her plate, before eating them for fear of infestations of aphids!

The hostel forewoman would decide on the daily work of the girls if they did not have a regular occupation. A van was provided to transport them but sometimes it was an

army truck which she could drive home.

Working life was varied. The girls could find themselves involved with anything and everything – a huge variety of jobs – from feeding pigs, sheep and hens, attending cows and milking to spreading manure, (which they might have had to clean out from hemmels), cutting thistles, haymaking and harvesting. Usually weekends were free and the girls could go home to their families; however, at harvest times extra hours were worked.

