

the story of wooler hostel

# the Joyce Ogle ROOM

**JOYCE OGLE (née Brown)** volunteered to join the Land Army in April 1942. Until then she had lived in Newcastle where she was born. Initially she lodged at Surrey House, but after two weeks was moved into this hostel. She recalls alighting from the bus, on a Sunday, at the market place in Wooler, and being shocked by there being only one street: 'Good grief, one street! I'll not be here long!' It felt strange. She missed her family and the great variety of shops.

The Forewoman, Polly Curle, planned where the girls should go for their daily work. If the distance was short they walked, if a little longer they would cycle but if further still a small van would take them to the appropriate farm. Her first farm was Weetwood. She also worked at Ilderton and when appointed to work with the threshing machine she would go wherever it went. The threshing machine was run by a man and his assistant, plus several Land Army girls. Two of them were required to feed in the sheaves of cereal. The grain was then separated from the chaff and straw. The grain was channelled into bags and the straw was baled. The girls had to collect the mounds of chaff and bag it. She recalled long days sorting potatoes and 'shawing' turnips. This

involved chopping off the greenery before the turnips could be stored in a pit. Their hands became very cold and sometimes numb, until the circulation returned. Gloves were of little use since they soon became wet. Singling of seedling turnips (sometimes working with bondagers [traditional female farm labourers], still employed in Doddington) was boring work which she did not like. It was very exacting since they had to remove and thin some plants without destroying the ones which were to be left.

At the hostel the warden, Mrs Grey, was a farmer's wife and planned a very wholesome menu. She remembers mince and dumplings, Irish stews and many pies, including steak and kidney. They had a sum, for insurance, deducted from their pay but did not pay for their board and lodging. The girls were not required to work at weekends and could go home if they could afford the return bus fare.

Recreation on weekdays might have included visits to the local pubs. At weekends dances were held at the Archibold Hall or at the Milfield R.A.F. base. The R.A.F band provided the popular 'big band' music of the time. If they were invited to a dance on the base a truck would be sent to transport them there and back. Their curfew time of 10.00pm was then extended to 11.00pm.

It was all a big change from town life and the work was heavy but once hardened, Joyce thoroughly enjoyed it.

She was 'released' in July 1948.

On applying to join the Land Army Joyce received a communication asking her to:

*"Please continue with your present occupation until you are needed for service."*

She had an interview with a representative from the Ministry of Labour.

A card then said:

*"You are now a member of the Women's Land Army. You are pledged to hold yourself available for service on the land for the period of the war. You have promised to abide by the conditions of training and employment of the Women's Land Army; its good name is in your hands. You have made the home fields your battlefield. Your country relies on your loyalty and welcomes your help."*

She signed to affirm:

*"I realise the national importance of the work which I have undertaken and I will serve well and faithfully."*

On the reverse is stated:

*"The UNDERTAKING which every volunteer signs on being accepted as a member of the Women's Land Army allows her to apply to her County Secretary for permission to resign if circumstances arise which make it difficult for her to keep her promise of service. She must not resign until this permission is received and when it is received she must return her uniform and badge to the county Land Army office."*

She was given a Women's Land Army (England and Wales) RELEASE CERTIFICATE, which read:

*"The Women's Land Army for England and Wales acknowledges with appreciation the services given by... who has been an enrolled member for the period from 18.4.1942 to 2.7.1948 and has this day been granted a willing release."*

A letter accompanied the certificate:

*"Your release from the Women's Land Army has been granted, and your name has been removed from the Register of members as from today."*



Left to right:  
Edith Hall, Margaret Tait and Joyce Ogle

