

the Cook's story



At bottom right: Josephine Barnes and Betty Foggin.



PEGGY EVANS (née Cleghorn) was only 13 years old when World War II broke out on September 3rd, 1939, and too young to have joined the Land Army Girls during the war.

However, assisted by an orderly, between 1948 and 1950, she worked as a cook at the Wooler hostel. Cooking meals for the girls was a full-time job, although she made time for short walks and once a month she was allowed a long weekend off to visit her family in Newcastle.

Her daily uniform comprised a fawn short-sleeved shirt, fawn dungarees, a dark green V-necked jumper and a heavy dark fawn-brown coat. Uniform shoes were heavy, hard and uncomfortable. The smart uniform included breeches, fastening at the knee over long stockings. She was issued with a beret but didn't like it.

Peggy cooked on a coal-fired stove which had two or three hotplates and ovens.

Breakfast always included either porridge or cornflakes. Toast was served with a little butter. Sometimes breakfast was cooked, using dried egg imported from the USA, for scrambling and baking. Fresh milk was delivered daily by Mrs Smart from the farm at Horsdonside near the entrance to the hostel.

Peggy made the sandwiches for the girl's lunch, usually filling them with cheese or corned beef.

Bread was usually bought in, though occasionally it was home-made. The girls returned to the hostel at 5pm, and had supper at 9pm (cocoa or tea, and sandwiches). Fruit was scarce, except for fallen apples in season that were usually used for baking.

The hostel had a gardener, Mr Dunn, who grew vegetables – potatoes, carrots, beetroot, onions, swedes, and greens. He also brought in the coal for the stove which had to be lit each morning.

Peggy recalls the girls as a happy lot who enjoyed the dances, the local picture house and who had boyfriends. Her time at the hostel came to a close on the 11th November 1950, when the W.L.A. was disbanded.

Peggy married the week after the hostel closed.



Keeping the home fires burning – left to right: Joyce Ogle, Bobby Curry, Violet Carr and Eileen Slater.



PEGGY EVANS

