

the story of wooler hostel

Below:
Betty Robinson (left)
and Violet Carr.



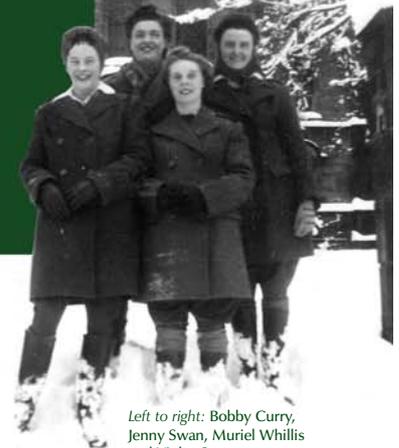
Violet Carr (née Beevor) originated from Whitley Bay. From memory, she joined the W.L.A. in about 1941. Before coming to Wooler she was based at Kielder, where she worked in the forestry department. The men previously employed there had been called up to joined the armed services. At first she didn't really like the life there but became used to it. Violet worked there for two years during which time she was involved with working in the nursery, sorting trees for planting. She recalls having to carry the saplings to the sites where the girls then planted them. There were only four or five girls at that location. At first they had a cook to prepare their food but later the girls took it in turns to cook for themselves.



the Violet Carr ROOM

Violet had heard of Wooler from a friend, who had earlier visited the area for walking trips. She took up courage to ask for a transfer and much to her amazement this was granted. It was arranged and a letter stated: "... to start work at farms in the district of Wooler for the War Agricultural Committee on Monday, 17th July 1944... Living accommodation will be provided for you at the Y.W.C.A. W.L.A. Hostel, Cheviot Street Wooler". Once there she liked it very much – after all she'd wanted to be there – and stayed in the area until after the war, eventually marrying her husband, Sandy, in 1951.

Wooler hostel was to be her new home. Initially, when sent out to work on the farms, she would join a group of more experienced land girls to learn some of their skills. She admitted she "Hadn't a clue about farm work!" She recalls a forewoman called Doris who would send the girls out to various farms as and when they were required by individual farmers. However, Violet was based on the same farm for most of the time – Bewick Folly – and remembered the farmer Mr Oliver Hall. She recalls being involved with a variety of jobs. The farm had pigs, sheep, cows, and poultry. Horses were kept because, although tractors were now in use, there might have been a shortage of fuel. The farm had its own threshing machine. She was involved with harvesting, threshing singling of turnips, feeding of animals, etc.



Left to right: Bobby Curry, Jenny Swan, Muriel Whillis and Violet Carr.

At Wooler hostel she recalls being well looked after; it was clean and they were presented with good food, there being a greater variety in the country than in the town. However, she admits being a 'fussy eater' and was a little wary of the content of their 'pot-luck', lunch-time sandwiches. These were put into tin boxes the night before.

Sometimes if, in bad weather, the hostel became muddy or wet the girls were called upon to help with the cleaning – many hands made light work! (A designated cleaner was normally employed.)

Transport to the particular farms was provided by a van, driven by one of the girls. However, sometimes they were taken by wagon; this would have been driven by a 'D.P' (a displaced person). She recalls a driver, 'Taffy' Swain, from Poland, who after dropping girls at the appointed farm would remain at the last one to work there himself before doing a reverse round to collect them at the end of the day.

Then it was home again and often a visit to the family of her then boyfriend, and husband to be.

REMEMBER YOUR RATION BOOKS AND IDENTITY CARD.
WOMEN'S LAND ARMY.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMITTEE.
Dear Madam, W.L.A. No. 53738 Name Miss A.V. Beevor (Date) 14.7.44
It has been arranged for you to start work at farms in the district of Wooler for the War Agricultural Committee on Monday, 17th July, arriving on 16.7.44
Living accommodation will be provided for you at the Y.W.C.A. W.L.A. Hostel, Cheviot Street, Wooler
Your nearest (bus stop) station is Wooler (Travelling Instructions overleaf.)
Your starting wage will be 48/- per 48/30 hour week, overtime at 1/2 per hour over 48/30 hours, and 1/5 per hour for work on Sunday, the weekly short day and public holidays, less deduction of 22/6 for board and lodging, and 10/- for Health Insurance Cards to your employer at the beginning of this employment. You must hand your on the panel of a doctor in the district of employment. If you are not already a member of an Approved Society, your District Representative, W.L.A., will advise you on this matter. Should you fall sick during employment and be unable to work, you must at once send your Doctor's Certificate to your Employer.
Mrs. Gray, the Warden, is expecting you.
Kindly return the attached slip, confirming that you will be able to carry out these arrangements. A franked addressed Label is enclosed for postage.
In case of any personal difficulty arising during your employment apply to: Mrs. Rea, Herrington, Ancoft, Berwick on Tweed (Tel. Ancoft 26) and who will be at Byres, Ryerforth, Wooler from 2 to 5 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month if you wish to see her on W.L.A. business.
Yours faithfully,
K. I. CLEMENT, Organising Secretary.
Mrs. F. C. CLEMENT, Heston Terrace, Hexham. Tel. Hexham 753.
N.B.—Winter time is from the first Monday in November to the last Sunday in February. Summer time is from the first Monday in March to the last Sunday in October.
NOTE—IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SHOULD LET ME KNOW SHOULD THIS EMPLOYMENT FINISH.
(SEE OVERLEAF)

Below:
Nancy Bland (left) and Violet Carr.

