

# WOMEN'S ROLES DURING WWII

## FACTSHEET

This factsheet is intended to accompany Episode 1 of MED Theatre's 'Devon, Dartmoor and World War Two' video series: 'Women's roles during WWII'.

To watch this video, visit MED Theatre's website and head over to our Online Resources page!

### What sorts of roles did women take on in Devon during World War Two?

NURSING

WOMEN'S  
TIMBER CORPS

LAND GIRL

MUNITIONS  
WORKER

AMBULANCE  
DRIVING

TELEPHONIST

AND MANY MORE...

FACTORY  
WORK



### THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY 'The Land Girls'

- Originally founded in World War 1
- Main role was to assist with food production through farming
- Young women from all over the country stepped forward to be sent to farms as extra workers and were known as the Land Girls
- Throughout WW2 over 200,000 women were employed by the WLA, with over 80,000 at the peak.

- For many living in rural areas, it was a shock to see young women walking around with trousered legs, and they were not always treated kindly by farmers and local residents, who also doubted their ability to work as hard as the men. But the Land Army were there to prove them wrong!
- Land Girls were sent to work in a shirt and trousered legs, usually wearing a jumper and either jodhpurs or dungarees. They also had a green beret

#### TRIVIA!

In MED Theatre's production of 'Devon's War Girls,' Molly is a Land Girl from London. She arrives at the farmhouse where she would be working to find there is no electricity, no flushing toilet and no hot water. This was not unusual in rural areas and lots of Land Girls would have experienced this!



## THE WOMEN'S TIMBER CORPS

### 'The Lumber Jills'



- Founded during WWII in 1942
- The country was in need of extra timber supplies and so the Women's Timber Corps was launched and women were invited to sign up for work in forestry
- They felled trees, measured trees for logging, loaded trucks and transferred the logs to the sawmills. Many of
- Some of them worked inside the sawmills and many women who had proven their ability to work hard were given more responsibility
- There were Lumber Jills working on forestry sites in various locations in Devon, including near Honiton and in Haldon Forest.

#### TRIVIA!

'Devon's War Girls' features a scene in which three Land Girls ride on one bike to get to a dance. This is actually a true story but the women were in fact Lumber Jills!

Many Lumber Jills were supplied with a bike so that they could ride from their lodgings to the forest they were working in each day, while others would be collected in a large truck and taken to the site.

### What difference did it make for women to be working in these roles during WW2?

Women were more accepted in the workplace

Further developed ideas about gender equality

Public perceptions of what women were capable of changed

Women's fashion changed and wearing trousers was more widely acceptable

The contribution made by women in both World Wars was acknowledged, but they were not rewarded with medals until 2008!

Can you think of any more..?

#### CREATIVE ACTIVITY:

Write a short diary entry imagining that you are either:

- A LAND GIRL, who has just arrived in Devon to begin your new job on a farm
- A LOCAL FARMER, who has had a Land Girl sent to work with you
- A LUMBER JILL, who is beginning work in forestry

Think about how this person is feeling, who they have met, what work they are doing and what they think about the war.

You can ask a parent or teacher for help, and if you'd like to send us what you write, we would love to read it! You can email it to us at [Education@medtheatre.co.uk](mailto:Education@medtheatre.co.uk)