

Cornwall Women's Land Army

MONTHLY NEWS LETTER.

March, 1943.

DEAR MEMBERS,

We are about to launch upon a series of "Wings for Victory." Weeks all over Cornwall, which means, I hope, that many of you will appear in many processions. Truro opens the campaign on Saturday, March 20th. I shall be able to attend this one myself, and I hope to meet the Land Army contingent afterwards.

Party at Truro

We had a very jolly party at Truro in the middle of February. Miss Kay Hills was again responsible for it, and invitations were issued to the members in the area. There were rather fewer members present than we hoped for, but a gathering of about 40 young men and maidens had a most amusing evening. Miss Hills was unable to be present, but I'm sure she would have been pleased to witness the success of such an impromptu evening. We had a few dances, one or two solos by Edwyna Argall and Millicent Tonkin, and the rest of the evening was spent playing games. We had musical bell—as a change from musical chairs. If you were holding the bell when the music stopped you fell out.

I think the most successful part of the evening was our Junior Brains Trust—a spur of the moment idea suggested by one of the soldier visitors. Everyone was given a slip of paper and invited to write down an intelligent question, and submit it to the Brains Trust. If they were unable to supply the answer it was then offered to the whole gathering. Everyone sent up a question, but what is more surprising, every question really was an intelligent one, and answers came flying from all directions. We had pinned around the walls 24 of those very difficult photographs. You know the idea, coat-hangers, corkscrews, etc., taken at odd angles, and you try to guess what it is. This also was a great success and filled in those difficult moments which are apt to rear their ugly heads at all parties when the music stops and you are not quite sure what to do next. We supplied modest little prizes for these.

Then we got on to community singing, which should really be described as competition singing. The party was divided into two groups and we sang "Tipperary" and "Pack Up Your Troubles" in concert. Very good fun, with your faithful scribe leaping up and down the middle of the room trying to do a Toscanini act of conducting.

And as a final gesture we decided to invite, or rather insist on, everyone doing a solo turn. Shrieks of dismay, of course, but Freda Johnson, noble lass, was chivvied into a dairymaid act. She called the cows home, and then proceeded to milk them. This went down very well. A young farmer was then made to show us how to "pitch a sheaf." He made a futile attempt at first, but eventually pitched an imaginary sheaf well over the gas bracket. It was all highly diverting, but time caught up with us and we had to close the evening with Auld Lang Syne. A good time was certainly had by all.

Correspondence

From C. Bodinar at St. Buryan I received the following:

"I have been here nine months, but have only just applied for the 'Land Girl' this month. I regret having not done so before, as I find it most interesting. Land work is very healthy, and I feel as fit as a fiddle since I started work here. My favourite job is milking, and I feel very devoted to the cows. Two brothers of mine have worked on a farm for several years, and naturally their topic when I was home was always farming. I, being a shop assistant, was never interested in farming and never joined in the conversations. Now I am able to have a good old chat with them whenever I go home, and I enjoy it immensely. I quite agree with you in saying we girls look twice as smart if our uniforms are worn correctly."

I wonder how many times I have been told by Land Army members how glad they are to be on the land. It is most encouraging.

And here is a letter from a Lelant member. She has fallen a victim to our lovely Cornwall. I know just how she feels.

DEAR FIFOLA,

You do like us girls writing to you, don't you, whatever it might be about? Well I decided I'd write this time suggesting two ideas which came to me. One which struck me upon seeing in last month's magazine the photo of the plaque presented to us by the Air Ministry was, if we can buy one Typhoon, why not another? Couldn't we have another "drive"? and a special effort from everyone to try and buy the "goods" once again. The second suggestion is, wouldn't it be quite a good idea if we were able to have some sort of indication on our arm bands as to which county employed us, small red material letters forming the name of the county would not require much material, would they, and would not look out of place. I'm probably talking out of my turn, but you'll tell me what you think, won't you?

I feel while writing that I'd like to tell you how these lovely spring days make me feel, and how grand the outdoor life is, but I find that it's quite beyond me to say or describe it to you. Perhaps you will understand what I mean when I say that I just stand and "look" and "feel" when I see the sun on these cold, crisp mornings rising above the clouds and turning everything into, as it were, a thousand glittering diamonds. It really is glorious. And the flowers! Oh, they make me feel like dropping right down and burying my face in them. I particularly like wild, windy days, with the rain splashing in my face, in fact, that liking seems to have been born in me because they have always appealed to me. Now, of course, I am able to take full advantage of them, and should you ever hear a noise wafting your way on such a day, you'll know it's me—singing, that's what it does to me. Not that I don't sing other times, but with more "volume"

than usual then. If I were a poet now I could describe all these feelings in so many words, couldn't I? But as I'm not blessed with a poetical turn of mind, I'll just have to hope that you'll understand what I've been trying to convey in plain writing and that you won't think me the barmiest creature you've come across. Should that cross your mind, just put it down to the country life, but quite seriously, it is grand, isn't it?

I am publishing a letter from Miss Mary Curtis, of Higher Truscott, St. Stephens, Launceston, hoping that among my readers there is some member who can give her the information she requires.

"Every time I read your letter my conscience pricks me with the thought that I am one of those who have not written you!

"I am writing for advice at the moment, however. There is a tremendous amount of sheep's wool on hedges and barbed wire in this district, and I am making a fair collection. Do you know to whom I can apply for instructions as to the cleaning, spinning and dyeing of same, please? I should, if possible, and if I get enough, like to try doing the entire process myself.

"I have been in the L.A. not quite a year and am enjoying life very much. Time flies at such a rate that I hardly have time to note in my diary the day to day events, but I mean to keep it up for future interest.

"I have just read (a Christmas present) a fine book, 'My Country Book,' by Tunnicliffe, which I'm sure would be of interest to all Land Girls doing general farm work."

And here is a letter packed with useful advice. It is from Freda Johnson.

"Like many other Land Girls I do my washing and shoe cleaning on Sunday mornings. The better the day, the better the deed. Anyway, while washing my dungarees the other Sunday I decided that the front of the legs just couldn't be patched any more and wondered what I could do. Then inspiration came. Use the back of the legs of one old pair to make the new front of the other pair. Then you have an almost new pair. My socks have been darned, patched, re-footed and darned and patched again, but still the legs are sound, so they are going to be made into ankle socks for the summer. Before wearing my L.A. boots I knocked in about a dozen 'Blakeys,' and whenever one comes out I replace it as soon as possible.

"By the way, if any dairy girls use 'Lavaloid' or similar stuff for washing buckets, put a little in the water when washing breeches or dungarees and you won't have half the scrubbing to do, besides saving soap."

Bicycles

Mrs. Alpine, your County Secretary, asks me to pass a message to you about your bicycles. Will you all, please, take great care of these valuable commodities, service them properly, and see that they are kept in good condition, because they cannot be replaced, as you know, and if

you don't look after them yourselves, you will find absolutely no one to do it for you. It is almost impossible to get any repairs done to bicycles in the few shops we have.

A Special Appeal

Do you know that in China there are 60 million refugees, 20 million more than the population of England? That since 1937 China has been fighting for her very existence almost unaided, fighting with her bare hands against Japanese tanks and planes? That 90 per cent. of her industries was captured by the Japanese, and yet she still fights on?

I have been recently to a lecture on China, given by the Rev. L. Ford, who has just returned from Tientsin, where he has lived for seven years, including three in enemy-occupied territory. I wish you could have listened to him, enthralled, as I did. He said China has always had a women's land army, and now she has 30,000 women fighting with the guerrillas behind enemy lines. The Chinese are a simple, peace-loving people, content to farm their few acres, and raise enough rice to feed their families. In the first months of the Japanese invasion they were bewildered

and terrified. They saw their simple homes bombed and destroyed; unspeakable horrors wrought upon their women-folk and children. And they had nothing with which to fight back—not an aeroplane or a tank, very few guns and only a small untrained army. China's attitude towards war summed up in one of their proverbs: "Just as good iron is not used for nails, so are good men not made into soldiers." And so China was ravaged and pillaged, and out of the chaos has been born a new spirit; under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek a wonderful army has taken shape, the industries have been restarted in unoccupied territory, machinery which was torn apart and transported many miles to the west of the advancing enemy, has now been reassembled and is producing goods for her armies' needs. Even her education has been improved. Japan destroyed 91 of China's 108 universities, but 114 are already operating again in unoccupied territory.

Just listen to this story. Mr. Ford came upon a small town which had received especial attention from the Japs. Not a house or building survived the bombing, excepting the little church. The town had been evacuated, and only a few

stragglers stayed behind. Yet those few stragglers, when they heard of the bombing of London, made a collection amongst themselves and gave it to London's Air Raid Relief Fund. It was not a large sum according to our standards, but would have kept a Chinese family for one month. Think of it; and can you bear to think of it without asking yourself what you can do to help China. The opportunity is bound to come to you. The Aid to China Fund needs your continued moral support and your immediate material help, as the Prime Minister has said. China must have a helping hand at once, and every little coin counts. We all have tremendous calls on our purses, but when the Aid for China Week comes to your area, remember the little bombed town and give what you can.

I would like to have given you a far wider account of the lecture I heard this week. I hope I have said sufficient to make you think about it.

And with the final and usual request for more letters from you, and my best wishes to you all.

I am, sincerely yours,

"FIFOLA."