



Vol. II.

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No. 1.

FAREWELL

THIS is a sad month for it brings with it the resignation of our Chief Administrative Officer, Mrs. Jenkins. At such a time words are inadequate but we want her to know how sadly we shall miss her, how sincerely we wish her well. The following tribute speaks for us all:—

"It is with heartfelt regret that members, officers and staff who know just how much Mrs. Jenkins has done for the Land Army during 10 years of devoted service, have now to say goodbye. Like many members who have had to give up service because of illness in their family, Mrs. Jenkins is now needed in her own home and our sympathy is sincerely offered that this is the reason that takes her from us.

Even before the W.L.A. became a fully-fledged war service in 1939, Mrs. Jenkins had, in 1938, been instrumental in planning its organisation. How well those plans were laid, with what skill the smallest detail was worked out, how clearly Mrs. Jenkins would explain every difficult point of administration, those whose job it has been to put those plans into practice at Headquarters and in the counties, have truly appreciated. Here was ability which commanded true admiration.

How warmly we welcomed her visits to the counties when, first as Assistant Director, then as Chief Administrative Officer, Mrs. Jenkins could meet individual members and talk about their work. Always keenly interested in the different jobs they had to do, her greatest pleasure and pride was to hear praise given to the land girls for work well done. Those friendly talks she gave to us at Rallies showed her as a wise and sympathetic leader who understood the difficulties that had to be met by old hand and new recruit.

Knowing all that Mrs. Jenkins has done to ensure fair conditions of work and welfare throughout the Land Army's life, it is up to us to show our gratitude in the way she would appreciate most of all, by doing our utmost in our own particular job to maintain the good name that she has so superlatively well helped the Land Army to win."

An Old Hand.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

We announce the appointment of Miss Amy Curtis to succeed Mrs. Jenkins as Chief Administrative Officer, W.L.A. She will take up her duties very shortly. During the war Miss Curtis served with the W.R.N.S., when she rose to the rank of Superintendent, Portsmouth Command, and was awarded the C.B.E. Since her demobilisation Miss Curtis has been working in the Resettlement and Advice Department, and the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Labour.

STANDARD CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

In the February number of "Land Army News," mention was made of a *new standard contract of service* for the Land Army. This will come into operation this month. Every employer will be required to sign a copy of the contract over a 6d. stamp for each member of the W.L.A. at present employed and for any other L.A. member he may employ in the future. The introduction of this contract will define and safeguard the working conditions of W.L.A. members at a time when the monthly visits of the Local Representatives must be replaced by quarterly visits paid by the County Organisers, so that the land girls will not have quite such close personal supervision as in the past.

During the coming weeks, the County Organisers in each county will visit the members of the Land Army and their employers, explain the working of the new contract and obtain the employers' signature. It is of the utmost importance that every member shall understand clearly her own position under the new contract and we think that some explanation of this may be welcomed by our readers.

The standard conditions under which members of the Land Army will be employed fall under four main headings, each of which is dealt with briefly below.

1. Weekly Contract.—Land Army members are supplied for regular full time work throughout the year on a weekly contract. *This can only properly be terminated by one week's notice given on a pay day either by employer or worker.* Either party may if necessary give a week's pay in lieu of notice but this should only be done in quite exceptional circumstances. Any Land Army member who gives or receives notice to end her contract should immediately inform her County Office.

2. Wages and Overtime Pay.—As is already generally understood, *employed members of the W.L.A. must receive at least the minimum wage and overtime rates laid down from time to time by Order of the Agricultural Wages Board for women agricultural workers.* So that every member may know exactly how she stands, a table giving current minimum weekly wage rates and overtime rates is attached to the standard contract. When you get your copy,

read the table carefully, keep it for future reference and tell the County Office at once if you think you are not receiving your proper wage and overtime payments. There is nothing to prevent an employer paying above these rates but he must not pay less.

3. Sick Pay.—A member who is unable to work through illness should inform her employer at once and should send a medical certificate as quickly as possible. *The employer must continue to pay full wages unless and until he gives a week's notice from pay day.* Since an employer is obliged to give formal notice to his worker in order to free himself from the legal obligation to pay full wages over what may be a long period of sickness, no member who receives notice from her employer during sickness need feel that this casts any reflection on her usefulness or on the quality of her work. (Special sick pay arrangements exist for employees of the A.E.C.S.)

If you should be ill for more than a few days, be sure to let the County Office know so that you may receive help in applying for National Health Insurance benefits or from the Benevolent Fund, should this be necessary.

4. Holidays with Pay.—Every member of the W.L.A. is legally entitled to such holidays with pay as are laid down by Orders of the Agricultural Wages Board. At present these are *one day's holiday after each two months consecutive service with the same employer within the agricultural year which runs from 1st November to 31st October.* These days may be saved up and taken as one week's paid holiday by arrangement with the employer.

It is the duty of every member of the W.L.A. to master the details of the conditions under which she is employed and to report any irregularity to the County Office. The arrangements are very simple and if members and their employers understand and adhere to them, difficulties are unlikely to arise. Be sure to ask your County Organiser about anything you do not understand when she comes to visit you. She is there to help you and you should make full use of her assistance.

LAND ARMY STAR

Mr. F. Williams, Common Wood, Holt, had a narrow escape from serious injury on 30th March when he was attacked and knocked down by a young bull owned by him.

Much credit for saving him from serious injury is due to Irene Chaloner, 161296, N. Wales, who is employed by Mr. Williams. Miss Chaloner drove the infuriated animal away and was able to get Mr. Williams to his home to receive medical attention.

After giving all the assistance she could to Mr. Williams, Miss Chaloner pluckily went back to the field again with the farm dog and brought the animal to the farm buildings where it was safely housed.

On the 18th May, the enrolled strength of the Land Army was 25,310.

COMPOST KEEPS THE SOIL ALIVE

What it is and how to make it

"If all the things that live in the ground was to come out on top, my boy, you'd run for your life!" The London evacuee father who made this wisecrack was quite right. The soil is alive. Positively crawling, in fact, with millions of living things, all with a job of work to do. The earthworms, bacteria and fungi (or bugs and toadstools if you like it better) and all the rest of the soil population are there for a purpose. A soil without them is a dead soil and it doesn't hold together; the sun dries it out, the wind blows it away and the rain washes it down the slopes. That is what is meant by erosion. But before this happens your crops will sicken and fail, because the soil has no life in it to transmit to them.

How do all these living things keep the soil healthy? Mainly by feeding on decayed living matter and turning it into plant food. So to keep the soil alive you must feed the soil population. This is where composting comes in.

Compost is mixed animal and vegetable waste, rotted down until it turns into rich, dark humus, like the clean, moist, friable stuff you find on the forest floor. Humus is produced by the decay of organic matter—that is to say, anything that is, or was once, alive. Nature makes compost very slowly. The leaves fall, and mix with twigs and dead stalks and the droppings of birds and animals, and rot down into a sweet-smelling, perfect natural manure. This takes time, but nature is in no particular hurry. In farming and gardening, however, we force the pace by growing more stuff than a piece of land would produce in its natural state, and then we cart it away, so that there is little left to feed the soil population and be turned back into plant food for the next crop. Artificial fertilizers will make good chemical losses, but they will not make humus. For thousands of years, farmers have been keeping up the humus content of the soil mainly by manuring and composting, but now that farmyard manure is scarce, composting becomes more important than ever. Under perfect conditions, we put back as much bulk of humus as was taken away in the last crop. But every little helps.

Composting is easy, but it takes a little care and skill to make good compost quickly, so that it is ready to use within three or four months. For materials, use anything that is, or was, alive; manure, weeds, lawn mowings, straw, sawdust, bedroom slops, night soil, tea leaves, pond weed, fish offal, chicken heads, dead rats, chaff or cavings, and so on, mixed with an occasional sprinkling of earth and a dusting of lime or chalk or wood ash to neutralize acidity. Some of these ingredients sound rather unsavoury, but the extraordinary thing about a well-made compost heap is that it turns the most stinking materials into sweet-smelling, earthy humus. And if everything is going well, all unpleasant smell will vanish within two days of building the heap. I once built a heap in which the main ingredient was pig manure, and 24 hours later I pulled out a handful, and there was nothing but a clean, hothouse smell like ferns and moss. The other odd thing is that you will not find any trace of your dead rats or fish bones in the finished heap. If the bacteria and fungi within the heap are doing their job, all the ingredients will disintegrate completely. The secret is to mix your materials well, and balance them up; try not to put in too much of anything. And put your seeding weeds in the middle of the heap, where the heat will kill the seeds. The same applies to any diseased material. Chop up anything tough and stalky with a spade. Build the heap within a day or two if you can, but if you cannot, then add another layer whenever you have got together enough stuff.

The best compost is made of one part animal waste (such as manure or fish offal) to three or four parts of vegetable matter. It helps to get these proportions right if you build the heap

in layers. First put some twigs or rough stuff as a foundation, to help drainage. Then put a six-inch layer of vegetable waste, a two-inch layer of manure or animal waste, a sprinkling of earth and a dusting of lime. Then start again with another four-inch layer of vegetable waste. But remember, this layering is not essential; it is just a way of getting the proportions right, and once you have a rough idea of the correct proportions, the more you mix your materials the quicker they will rot down. Wet, juicy stuff like lawn mowings should be mixed with dryer material like straw or chaff or it will get slimy. Build up the heap in a compact square or oblong, on well-drained soil you can do it in a pit. It can be any size, but the bigger the better. Small garden heaps are best made in a box, such as a old packing case; and even large, farm heaps do best if they are protected on the outside by baled straw or hurdles. When it is high enough (say four feet) finish it off with a four-inch layer of earth.

Compost needs air and moisture, but not too much. The process is one of fermentation, not putrefaction. The bacteria of fermentation need air, those of putrefaction flourish in airless, waterlogged conditions. So take a crowbar and make one or two vertical airholes, about two feet apart, in the finished heap. They let air in and act as chimneys by creating a draught. Keep the heap about as moist as a squeezed-out sponge—if necessary by watering—but don't let it get waterlogged or it will putrefy and smell bad. In very wet weather it pays to cover it with an old tarpaulin or a couple of sheets of corrugated iron.

In some ways, composting is rather like cooking, and a heap which is made quickly, with plenty of fresh greenstuff and/or manure in it, will get very hot. Steam will come out of the vent holes and you may not even be able to hold your hand in it. This is good; it means that everything is working quickly. It will cool down in a week or two, but keep in the heat as long as you can.

If you pull out a handful from the middle and it smells like a hothouse in the early stages, or fresh and earthy in the later stages, everything is going well. Good signs are toadstools growing on the heap and, in the early stages, a whitish mould called mycelium spreading right through the heap. A smell of ammonia means that it is too wet and not getting enough air. If this happens, make more air holes or, better still, turn it. If it is too dry, it just won't rot down.

If you are in a hurry for your compost, it pays to turn it when it is a month old, and again after another month. This lets air in and mixes the materials and any parts that are too wet or too dry. When turning, put the unrotted outside part well in the middle so that it gets a chance to rot down too.

There are various "activators" and compost accelerators on the market, but they are not essential. Manure or animal waste is the best activator. It sets things going. But if you have little or no animal waste, a herbal activator like "Q.R." is safe and helpful. Beware of chemical activators like sulphate of ammonia. They help to rot the material down, but earthworms don't like them, and in feeding the soil one should study the tastes of its inhabitants. It is a good sign if a compost heap gets full of earthworms. They are your very good friends and will do much of your digging and composting for you if you give them a little encouragement.

Making good compost is just tricky enough to be interesting. Using it, however, is almost foolproof. There is no such thing as an overdose, and you just can't go wrong. But it is best not to dig it in too deep. Put it on top as a mulch, or fork it into the top soil, which is the "live" part of the soil. Even if it is not completely rotted, it is still valuable in quite a rough stage. The worms and the rest of the soil population will digest it and gradually turn it into plant food. But the more rotted it is, the quicker your crops will get the benefit. Perfect compost can be handled with a spade,

rather than a fork, and about 80 per cent. of it will go through a quarter-inch sieve.

Making compost is exciting, and your reward is in the strong, healthy, disease-resisting crops that grow on well-composted soil. I have told you enough to enable you to make it and experiment on your own. But there is more in it than I can compress into an article of this length. If you want to know more about it, write to the Soil Association, New Bells Farm, Haughley, Suffolk, who will put you in touch with other composters and help you over any difficulties, as they have helped me.

Mary de Bunsen.

IN THE LAND ARMY . . .

When people ask me about my work, and I tell them I am a Recorder at Oaklands Institute in Hertfordshire, they nearly always say "Oh yes, Milk Recording, I know." Then I have to explain that, although I do keep some of the milk books, my real job is to keep the livestock records of all animals on the Institute Farm.

All the animals are pedigree and we keep about 100 pigs and 130 cattle, including cows and followers. The pigs are Wessex and Large Whites, and the cattle are Dairy Shorthorns, the milking herd of thirty being attested and officially recorded daily.

In the office a special index card system of all animals, cows, calves, bulls, steers, is kept, giving calving dates, lactation yields, ear-numbers, etc., and all cards must be kept right up to date. Thus the life history of any one animal can be looked up at a minute's notice. Cards are also kept of the stock bulls, giving progeny records of their daughters. We are often sending animals off to the Shows and Sales and these details are invaluable when it comes to filling in entry forms and making out pedigrees.

We keep detailed records of all the breeding pigs, including dates of farrowing, numbers of pigs born and reared, and their individual weights at three weeks and eight weeks old. All pigs must be registered when eight weeks old, and later on, if they are to be used for breeding, we have to enter them in the N.P.B.A. Herd Book.

I keep the ration books each week and have to keep a check on all feeding stuffs used for pigs, horses and cattle, and also of the purchased and home-grown feeding stuffs that come into the barn. Each week I go round to the barn and check up on the actual food with my figures and hope they will agree!

The time sheets are handed over to me every Friday and I have to do the time analysis on them. Thus the hours spent on each department such as dairy, tractors, pigs, stock, arable work, etc., are worked out in detail, and the costs go to the appropriate departments.

Other duties I have are sending off milk and blood samples, keeping the livestock register, typing out pedigrees, etc., and in between whiles, helping on the farm. Sometimes I do a weekend duty on pigs, stock or dairy, when they are short-handed, and I enjoy the combination of indoor and outdoor work.

Before the W.L.A. found me this job at Oaklands, I completed one year's Agricultural course at Moulton under the Government scheme. This was a great help and I have found the knowledge very useful in my work. I think this type of job is ideal for the girl who wants to stay in Agriculture but who likes a certain amount of indoor work.

Herts.

Audrey Green, 23567.

. . . AND OUT

We have a Land Girl working in the gardens of our Nurses' home and she gives me the "Land Army News" each month and I do enjoy reading it; somehow I cannot get the land out of my mind and I often think of my days as a recorder in Norfolk.

I really enjoy nursing, especially now that I am beyond the junior stage. I have passed my Hospital Prelim. and the State Prelim. I did

not think that I had got through the State Exam. so you can imagine my feelings when the results became known. I sit for my finals next year and when I realise what a lot I have to learn, I think I shall never do it. The work is sometimes hard and tiring, some days we are running all day fighting to keep a patient going and when the danger is past, what a wonderful feeling it gives us to tell the relations that all's well—it is worth the work and worry.

Just now I am in the children's ward and I love it there. We have four tiny babies and it's grand to see them getting better and better. What a lot there is to learn about children and how cute and knowing they are. The sisters and doctors are grand, they don't mind if they catch us having a game with the children.

I have also worked on the Women's Surgical and Medical Wards and have also done Men's Medical but not surgical yet. I do not mind where I work although I like surgery best. I love to go to the theatre and watch operations, I never knew before how much we owe the surgeons.

We spent a lovely time at Christmas, I was on the Women's Medical ward at the time and we did not have any serious cases in, so we had fun. The Sister turned out trumps and everyone including the visitors had a good time. On Boxing Day a young girl was brought to the ward and her baby was born at 8.30 a.m. What a fuss we made of the baby, a boy, it was spoilt. Four babies were born in the small maternity unit on the ward during my three months' work there. At first I did not think I should like midwifery but now I have had a little experience I'm beginning to think that I shall want to take my midwifery exams., when I leave here.

I have never forgotten those years I spent on the land. I cannot see how any Land Girl could ever forget, and when I am out in the lovely country around Watford I have a sad feeling inside, for there is something about the country that seems to draw me and I know that if I ever had to give up nursing I would go back to country life again.

Ann Hurle, ex-W.L.A.

BENEVOLENT FUND

In the five years it has been running, the Benevolent Fund has helped thousands of girls who have joined the Land Army in the various problems of their lives. To many it has given a much-needed holiday, especially towards the end of the long war years, to others a course in homecraft, a grant towards a training for a new career or legal aid following a serious accident at work.

Above all, however, the Committee of the Fund have felt it a first and important responsibility to help those Land Army members who are ill and have to give up work through sickness. The £ s. d. which is sent to the Fund goes out again daily in grants to members who are sick—grants to be spent not only on the day-to-day necessities of life but also on extras such as fruit, milk foods, beef tea and other expensive items of diet for which the family budget often does not allow. Even in hospital a patient must sometimes have these things taken to her, or perhaps a bed jacket or dressing gown is needed and a grant from the Fund can often help to provide these.

In many sickness cases, particularly after an operation, convalescence or further nursing care is required and to provide for this the Benevolent Fund maintains exclusively for the Land Army a number of beds at Ashton Wold and Red Cross Home. Here, over 700 members and ex-members have already spent a happy time recuperating under the care of the Matron and her staff. Those who are reaching the final stages of recovery sunbathe in the garden or bathe in the swimming pool. Many have been able to return to work more quickly as a result of the kindly attention they received in the Home. In fact, help from the Fund has in innumerable cases made all the difference between a short or a long and serious illness.

PASTURES NEW

Vacancies

Buckinghamshire. Post with accommodation for small family is available for girl who can drive. Milk round, dairy and general farm work. Usual wage.

Large unfurnished house available for two girls able to do machine milking, general and dairy work. Post would suit girls with families requiring accommodation. Usual wage.

Gloucestershire. Woman required for farm and market garden. Knowledge of horticulture and some milking experience. Candidate must be prepared to help with stock and at haymaking and harvest. Salary up to £4, plus bonus on sales.

West Sussex. Relief Milker urgently required. Experienced in machine and hand milking. Able to cycle. Four farms to be visited, one three days a week. Salary, Relief Milkiers Scale.

Posts Wanted

West Sussex. Candidate with six years experience, able to take charge of small herd requires hand milking post, preferably in Home Counties, where cottage available.

EAST SUSSEX WEEK-END

The staff of the East Sussex County Office felt that there were many members of the Land Army who would like to use the London Club, but were shy of going up on their own. With this in mind it was decided to hold a "Club Week-end" and all the accommodation was booked for Saturday, 8th May. Thirty-four girls applied to go and plans were drawn up to suit all pockets; a choice being given between going on a planned trip or "doing what you like." The following was written by a volunteer who took part:—

"A very enjoyable week-end from 8th to 9th of May was spent by 34 members of the East Sussex Women's Land Army at the W.L.A. club in London. The whole of the club was occupied by East Sussex volunteers, where we were made very welcome. Those who were able to get away early made a tour of various places of interest on Saturday afternoon. Others who arrived later made up parties for the evening. Some members went to the ballet at Covent Garden, others to a variety show at the Duke of York's Theatre, whilst the rest saw Reg. Leopold and his orchestra, with Marie Burke as guest artist, at the B.B.C. concert hall. On Sunday one party attended service at Westminster Abbey, and later went to Kew Gardens.

The rest of us had a delightful trip by coach to Windsor in the morning, where we were shown round the Castle grounds, and afterwards had a picnic lunch by the river. In the afternoon we went to Hampton Court and toured the State apartments and grounds. Tea was served before we joined the coach, and we travelled back to the club. Everyone was very tired by this time, but full of enthusiasm at our enjoyable week-end. The weather was perfect which made our trip even more successful, and we are already planning ahead for our next visit to the club which we hope to make in the autumn."

E. Sussex.

M. Bennet, 44246.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Peggy Gorton, 52131, Montgomery, and Radnor, who won the First Prize of £5 for the best work done by a boy under 21 or a girl of any age and the First Prize of £2 2s. for the best work done by a Standard or D. Brown Tractor in a competition held by the Llangorse and District Ploughing Society in March, 1948.

And to Jean Arscott, Gloucester, 114304, who was awarded the silver spoon for the best W.L.A. turn-out at the Gloucester District Calf Club Show in April; this the second year running that Jean has won this award.

And to Ida Butters, Norfolk, 141373, who won first place in the Sugarbeet Chopping

Open Competition which was held at Primrose Farm, Beeston.

And to Margaret Brown, Norfolk, 80987, who won third prize in the same competition.

And to the following Shropshire members who have been awarded bronze medals for their long service in agriculture by the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*:—Eileen Burton, 28813, Kathleen Meredith, 29241, Caroline Pain, 11587, Margaret Richards, 31588, Phyllis Hanson, 11352, Nellie Smith, 40328, Agnes Shepherd-Jones, 24037, Priscilla Morgan, 8212, Ida Leedham, 42432, Kathleen Hughes, 562.

LANDGIRL'S LIBRARY

In "The Land of Britain, Its Use and Misuse" by Dr. L. Dudley Stamp, Professor at the London School of Economics and Founder of the Land Utilisation Survey, you will find many brilliant suggestions as to how every acre in Britain might be put to the best use. We suggest that those who are interested should ask for this book at their nearest public library.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor,

I was especially interested in Miss Wade's article, "Ropesight" which appeared in the May number of the Land Army News. In spite of being a quinquagenarian I also responded to an appeal for bell-ringers in a Sussex village this spring and find it a completely fascinating occupation. My only grievance is that it is impossible to get more than an hour's practice each week and there is so much to learn in such a short time. At first, bell-ringing seems really hard work but soon one realises that much is a mere sense of rhythm and a matter of knack rather than of strength.

The patience of skilled bell-ringers is wonderful—they are always willing to help the novice although at times it must be very hard for the rest of the team to be kept at simple "rounds" and "changes" when they are anxious to practice and learn exciting "methods." I am not yet nearly as advanced as Miss Wade but even so I am longing for the day when I shall be skilled enough to join Miss Wade and other W.L.A. bell-ringers at a District Meeting.

D.S.S. Headquarters Staff.

COUNTY NEWS

BEDS.—During the past two months a special effort has been made over Proficiency Tests, and the following were successful in Market and Field Work. J. Steel (distinction), B. Woods, M. Perry, R. Walden, P. Johnston, M. Howe-Double, J. Eatherley, P. Allsobrook, D. Skeggs, D. Dew, R. Rawes, G. Withworth, M. Bacon. The following in General Farm Work. M. Muckleston (distinction), A. Wildman, J. Davis, R. Denton, K. Walden, G. Battersbury, B. Winn, A. Hislop, B. Cunningham, J. Bond. The following in Milking. G. Travis (distinction) and I. Mullins. Kensworth, Leighton Buzzard and Toddington Hostels have recently held dances in aid of the Local Welfare Fund. The dances were well run and well attended and were most successful financially. Our best thanks are due to those who worked so hard over the organisation and catering, etc. Special mention must be made of the excellent work put in by Pearl Coutts and her band of helpers at Toddington Park. They laboured almost "night and day" to make the dance a success, ably aided and abetted by Mrs. Malloch who turned out in fancy dress and gave yeoman service. Apart from dances, some of the girls in the hostels have been making collections amongst themselves towards the fund, and Cople House has been particularly generous. Perhaps some of the private girls who read these notes may like to contribute their mite from time to time, for it is this fund upon which all Land Girls draw when they ask for help in sickness or for dentist's bills, etc., that they find hard to pay. All those who know her will we know wish to offer their deepest sympathy to Mrs. Stone, Warden of Cople House, for her recent tragic loss in the death of her son John at the early age of 23 after a very short illness. Many hostels have been saving for Sunday motor coach trips. These are most popular and always very much enjoyed. Aspley Guise have been rehearsing for the Music Festival of the Bedford Rural School of Music which was held on 22nd May. A very successful effort which the girls thoroughly enjoyed.

BERKS.—We were very pleased to welcome Mrs. Jenkins to Berkshire on 13th May, although the occasion was a sad one—the last meeting of Committee Members and Representatives. Mrs. Jenkins spoke of the achievements of the W.L.A. in obtaining improved conditions for women working on the land. Lady Mount expressed the regret felt by all voluntary workers in Berkshire that

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