

The Women's National Land Service Corps leaflet and Handbook (CR0815/118 & 119)

March's Document of the Month has been chosen to commemorate Women's History Month. The two documents selected from the same collection, both dated as being issued in circa 1917, aptly illustrate the role of The Women's National Land Service Corp (also known as the Women's Land Army) during the First World War.

Background

During the course of the First World War, women found themselves taking on roles traditionally undertaken by men.¹ Many women had already taken on work to help with the war effort; for example, the dangerous task of making munitions in factories, joining the police and becoming firefighters.²

As the war raged on past the first year or two, there were new challenges as the opposing forces had successfully cut off food exports to the UK and crops were failing.^{1,3} As continued heavy losses to the fighting forces were sustained, more men were required to enlist, leaving a shortage in male labourers to maintain the much-needed farming produce output.¹ Therefore, the government set out on a campaign to recruit women to take on these agricultural tasks to ensure the nation did not starve.^{1,3}

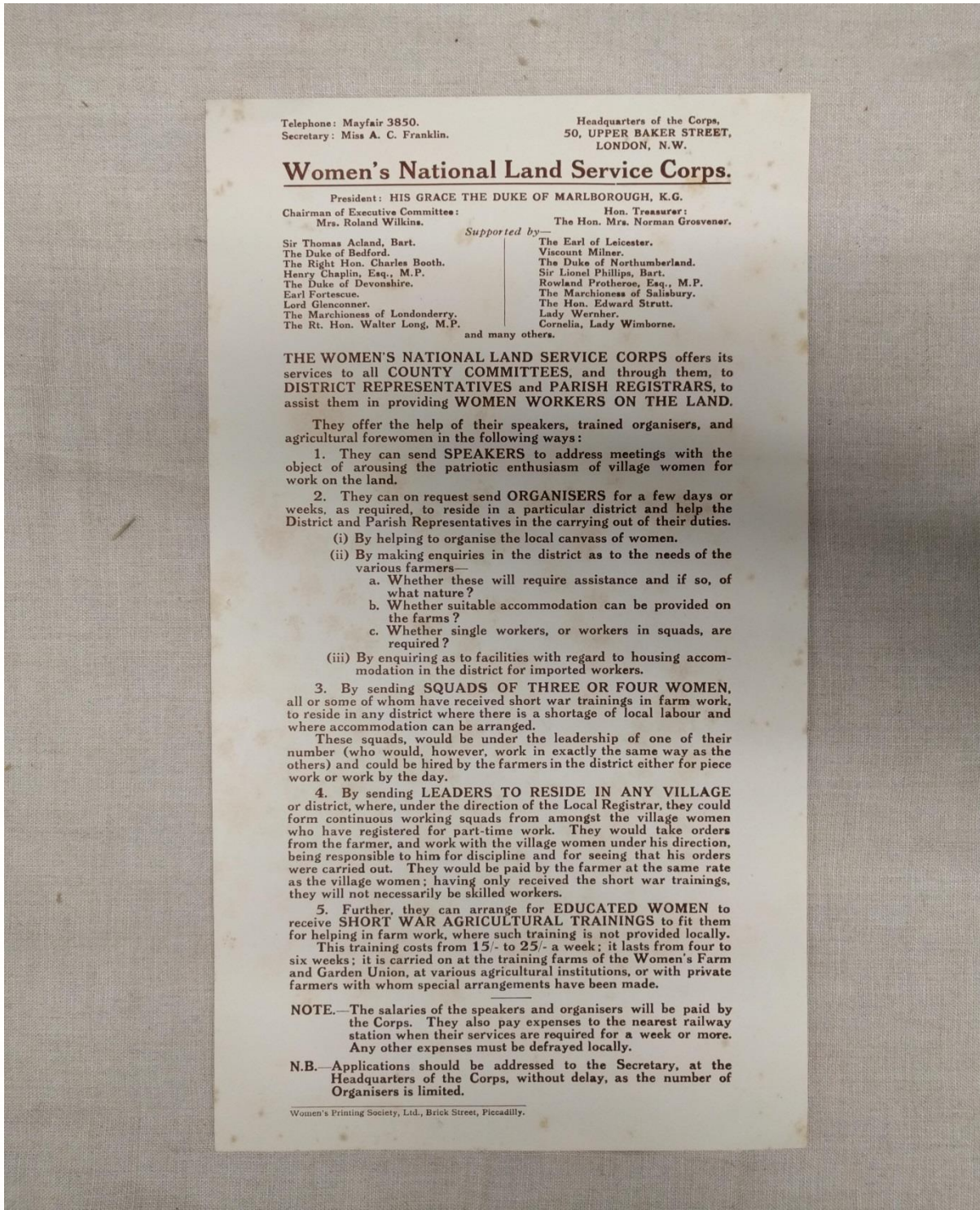
In return for their services, the women were offered agricultural training, uniforms, free travel and a minimum wage.⁴

¹ The National Archives. *A Call to the Women of Great Britain: The Formation of the Women's Land Army*. <https://www.history.blog.gov.uk> : accessed 13 February 2019.

² Striking Women.Org. *Women and Work - World War I: 1914-1918*. <https://www.striking-women.org> : accessed 13 February 2019.

³ BBC. *How Land Girls helped feed Britain to victory in WW1*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-26238755> : accessed 13 February 2019.

⁴ Warwickshire County Record Office. *The Womens Land Service Corps Leaflet*. Document reference CR0815/118.



Telephone: Mayfair 3850.
Secretary: Miss A. C. Franklin.

Headquarters of the Corps,
50, UPPER BAKER STREET,
LONDON, N.W.

Women's National Land Service Corps.

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and many others.

THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL LAND SERVICE CORPS offers its services to all COUNTY COMMITTEES, and through them, to DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES and PARISH REGISTRARS, to assist them in providing WOMEN WORKERS ON THE LAND.

They offer the help of their speakers, trained organisers, and agricultural forewomen in the following ways:

1. They can send **SPEAKERS** to address meetings with the object of arousing the patriotic enthusiasm of village women for work on the land.

2. They can on request send **ORGANISERS** for a few days or weeks, as required, to reside in a particular district and help the District and Parish Representatives in the carrying out of their duties.

(i) By helping to organise the local canvass of women.

(ii) By making enquiries in the district as to the needs of the various farmers—

- a. Whether these will require assistance and if so, of what nature?
- b. Whether suitable accommodation can be provided on the farms?
- c. Whether single workers, or workers in squads, are required?

(iii) By enquiring as to facilities with regard to housing accommodation in the district for imported workers.

3. By sending **SQUADS OF THREE OR FOUR WOMEN**, all or some of whom have received short war trainings in farm work, to reside in any district where there is a shortage of local labour and where accommodation can be arranged.

These squads, would be under the leadership of one of their number (who would, however, work in exactly the same way as the others) and could be hired by the farmers in the district either for piece work or work by the day.

4. By sending **LEADERS TO RESIDE IN ANY VILLAGE** or district, where, under the direction of the Local Registrar, they could form continuous working squads from amongst the village women who have registered for part-time work. They would take orders from the farmer, and work with the village women under his direction, being responsible to him for discipline and for seeing that his orders were carried out. They would be paid by the farmer at the same rate as the village women; having only received the short war trainings, they will not necessarily be skilled workers.

5. Further, they can arrange for **EDUCATED WOMEN** to receive **SHORT WAR AGRICULTURAL TRAININGS** to fit them for helping in farm work, where such training is not provided locally.

This training costs from 15/- to 25/- a week; it lasts from four to six weeks; it is carried on at the training farms of the Women's Farm and Garden Union, at various agricultural institutions, or with private farmers with whom special arrangements have been made.

NOTE.—The salaries of the speakers and organisers will be paid by the Corps. They also pay expenses to the nearest railway station when their services are required for a week or more. Any other expenses must be defrayed locally.

N.B.—Applications should be addressed to the Secretary, at the Headquarters of the Corps, without delay, as the number of Organisers is limited.

Women's Printing Society, Ltd., Brick Street, Piccadilly.

Warwickshire County Record Office. *The Womens Land Service Corps Leaflet.*
Document reference CR0815/118.

The Women's Land Army

Although described as The Women's Land Army, it was not a military organisation. However, it was disciplined and well-coordinated with a military feel.¹

The leaflet describes the services provided by the Land Army;⁵ for example, "Sending squads of three or four women, all or some of whom have received short war trainings in farm work" and the handbook⁴ provided guidance on how the women should conduct themselves as part of The Women's Land Army.

It covered information on how the women should dress and behave; for example, "Noisy or ugly behaviour brings discredit, not only upon yourself but upon the uniform and the whole Women's Land Army", as well as providing practical guidance on how to look after their uniforms!⁴



Warwickshire County Record Office. *The Women's Land Army Handbook*. Document reference CR0815/119

⁵ Warwickshire County Record Office. *The Women's Land Army Handbook*. Document reference CR0815/119