

My mum Joan Harding as she was known then, joined the Women Land Army (WLA) during WW2. Before the war started a lot of food was imported from abroad but after war broke out it was necessary to grow more food at home. Many of the agricultural workers had joined the armed forces so the WLA was restarted in 1945 (it had existed for a short while after WW1) to help meet the demand.

The land girls as they were known did a huge variety of different jobs. They milked cows, helped with lambing and poultry, did the ploughing and gathered the crops, dug ditches, caught rats and other agricultural pests and drove and looked after farm machinery. Some also chopped trees and ran sawmills. There was minimal training and most women were expected to learn about agricultural work while they were actually doing it.



Mum on left with USA soldiers

In London just before VE day.

My mum worked at several different farms during the war. Mostly she lived in hostels with other land girls. The hours were very long, there was very little pay and until 1943 no paid holidays. The girls were each given their own uniforms which consisted of green jumpers, brown breeches or dungarees, brown felt hats and khaki overcoats. At some of the farms she worked at she worked





VE day Celebrations

75years

alongside Italian prisoners of war shown here (Mum centre front)

Many of the friendships that mum made during this time lasted the rest of her life with regular national reunions. In 2005, the part the Land Girls played in WW2 was acknowledged by their inclusion in the memorial to the women of World War II in Whitehall. Mum was very honoured to be invited to the Queens official unveiling and I was lucky enough be invited as her guest.

From Mrs Holland