

Women At War

The 11th of November is Remembrance Day. A day when Great Britain and other **Commonwealth** countries stop to give two minutes silence to the heroes from the wars that have taken place across the lands. We often think about what it must be like to have been a soldier, to experience the fighting and be away from home for such a long time. There are other heroes though that are often forgotten about. These heroes are the women that were left behind in World War One (WWI).

Back in time, before WWI, soldiers were men. Women were not **permitted** to become soldiers or to join the army. In fact, there were only a few types of jobs that women could have: in the **textiles** industry, servants for upper-class families or secretaries. Now, women can do any job they would like and have children even though they work and live full lives. This was not the case **pre-1914**.

Although women were not on the frontline in foreign countries fighting as soldiers, they were still very important to the war effort in WWI. Having sent off the men from their family, women were at a loss as to what they could do to help.

What jobs did they do?

Women filled the jobs that the men had to leave behind in order to go to war. They were **enlisted** as the first female police officers during WWI. The Women's Patrol (as they were named) would monitor train stations and other public places as well as inspect women who were working in the **ammunitions** factories to ensure nothing was taken in that could cause an explosion. Ammunitions factories made weapons and **shells** for the men to use at the frontline. This was often dangerous work though, as they were using **toxic** materials and explosions were a very real threat.



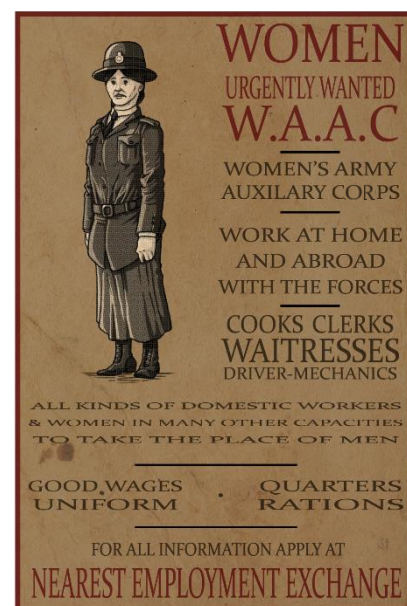
The first women police officers took on the role during WWI.

Other jobs available to women during the war were transport roles such as bus conductors, and drivers and carriage cleaners on the railways. The country needed postal workers, bankers, clerks, almost every job was needed to be carried out by women while the men were away at war.

In 1917, there was an investigation which found that many jobs that the men were doing near to the frontline could be done by women which meant more men would be freed up to fight. The Women's Army **Auxiliary Corps** (WAAC) was set up which enlisted women to carry out jobs such as cooking and driving to directly support the men on the frontline. Women were persuaded to join with promises of good wages, places to live and plenty of food.

As women who previously stayed at home to look after their children were now working long hours, there was a need for more childcare. Nurseries were set up with funds from the Government so that women could work and support the war effort. Some women had to rely on their mothers to look after their children whilst they were at work because they could not afford to send their children to nursery.

One of the most famous jobs that women did during WWI was being a part of the Women's Land Army. The women that

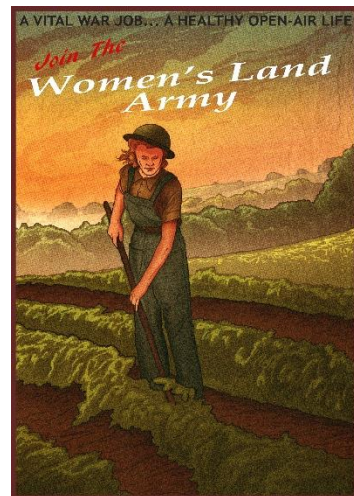


An advert persuading women to join the WAAC.

worked on the land were known as 'Land Girls' and typically took up the role of farmers. This was a really important role as the country were on rations of food. Imported food could not be brought in to the country and therefore it was vital that farms continued producing food. With the fit and healthy men away at war, the only people left were the women to keep the vital resource going. By the end of 1917, there were around 260,000 women working as farm labourers.

Persuasive posters were used to recruit women to work as farmers to keep the food supply going. Some of the male farmers left behind needed persuading to accept women employees too!

The Land Army uniform included trousers. Women did not wear trousers before the war, trousers were for men only, however in the work that the women would be doing, it was more practical for women to wear trousers than dresses and skirts if out farming the land.



A poster encouraging women to join the Land Army.

Propaganda

Propaganda was released to encourage and persuade women to take up new roles to help the war effort. With their husbands, fathers and brothers away at war, the women were a key part to support the war effort back at home but some women needed encouragement as working was something they were not used to. Adverts were persuasive to encourage the uptake of important jobs. Great Britain would not be able to survive without women replacing the men in the work that they did.

What happened after WWI?

At the end of the war things mostly went back to how it was before. Women were paid less in the same roles as the men carried out. There was a worry that employers might keep the women on as they were cheaper to pay, however this was not the case. Many women lost their new jobs as the men came back from war to take their old jobs up again. There was also no need for ammunitions anymore so many of those factories shut down leaving the women who worked at them without a job.

Although most women went back to their usual daily lives at home – caring for the children and looking after the house – WWI did many positive things for women and women's rights. It showed the world that women could do the same jobs as men and were good at it too! It was the beginning of a time of change for women in the United Kingdom despite the initial uncertainty both men and women felt about women going to work.

Women At War – Follow-Up Work

1. How did the way in which the text is laid out help you find information quickly?

2. What do you think were the advantages/disadvantages of having most women working during the time of WWI?

3. Find evidence in the text to tell us what the general public thought about women working during the war.

4. Summarise the key points of the text.

5. What is meant by the phrase *“It was the beginning of a time of change for women in the United Kingdom”*?

6. The text is mainly factual. Give an example of an opinion in the text.

7. What was one of the most famous roles that women took on during WWI?

8. What do you think women thought about having to replace the men in their jobs? Why do you think this?

9. What was the most dangerous job for women to do during WWI and why was it dangerous?

10. If you were a woman during WWI, what job would you have preferred to do and why?

11. Now that women had jobs during WWI, was there gender equality? Why, or why not?

Write the meaning of each of these words.

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Commonwealth | |
| permitted | |
| textiles | |
| pre | |
| enlisted | |
| ammunitions | |
| shells | |
| toxic | |
| Auxiliary | |
| Corps | |
| typically | |
| vital | |
| labourers | |
| recruit | |
| propaganda | |
| initial | |
| uncertainty | |

Task A

Circle the correct antonym for the word.

permitted

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| allowed | accepted | forbidden |
|---------|----------|-----------|

initial

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|-------|-------|----------|
| final | early | original |
|-------|-------|----------|

toxic

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|--------|----------|-----------|
| lethal | harmless | poisonous |
|--------|----------|-----------|

typically

| | | |
|-------------|---------|-----------|
| predictable | usually | unusually |
|-------------|---------|-----------|

Task B

For each of the words below, write a sentence using the antonym chosen above.
Underline the antonym that you used in each sentence.

permitted

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initial

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toxic

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typically

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Here is a quotation from the text.

Propaganda was released ... to help the war effort.

Why is an ellipsis used in this quotation?

Write a complex sentence about the text using *after* as a subordinating conjunction.

Rewrite the sentence below adding in a subordinate clause to make it a multi-clause sentence. Remember to use the correct punctuation.

Women had to work.

Put a tick in each row to show the type of noun underlined in each sentence.

| Sentence | abstract | collective | common | proper |
|--|----------|------------|--------|--------|
| <u>Sally</u> worked as a bus conductor. | | | | |
| The <u>crowd</u> of women were called 'Land Girls'. | | | | |
| The young woman worked as a clerk in the <u>bank</u> . | | | | |
| The woman showed <u>courage</u> when starting her new job as a police officer. | | | | |