



## WOMENS LAND ARMY



## ROSINA EVANS 1940-1944



## A PERSONAL STORY

The Women's Land Army worked on farms all over the country to bring in the harvest, sow the seed, milk the cattle, and pick the fruit. A letter to 'The Land Girl' concludes "after putting in the regulation 50 hours plus overtime during the harvest, we have reaped our garden of half an acre, I have a green house full of tomatoes, and have made about 50 lbs of jam and some pickles."





**Rosina Evans (nee Davies) Women's Land Army [No. 33858]**

- 1940, July - then living in (Pantygaseg Farm, Myddfai) Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire, West Wales – enlisted in W.L.A.
- training at Plasisaf, Llanybri, Carmarthenshire
- 1940, Oct - Cwm Farm, Morganstown, Glamorgan – severe dermatitis from milking cows led to a move
- 1941 - transferred to Market Gardening Section of W.L.A. at Cardiff - and made Forewoman of mobile gang, taking parties of Land Girls to various market gardens and stately homes where large sections of their grounds/lawns and flower beds were being turned over to the cultivation of growing vegetables for the Home market.
- 1941 - another move - to Pest Control – based at hostel in the cliff tops at Pennard, took team of 20 Land Girls to gas rabbits, rats and mice in the Gower Peninsula (thousands of rabbits were destroying wheat and hay crops; and rats were causing damage and waste in granaries and barns)
- 1942 - posted to Pencoed Hostel as Assistant Labour Officer – responsible for around 200 Land Girls (about 40 at a custom-built hostel in Bonvilston; around 20 in an old country house, The Grange at Llantwit Major; and the remainder at Pencoed Hostel). The Pencoed Hostel housed around 2000 people; and included: 'Bevan Boys' (boys conscripted into mining); workers at the nearby Arsenal at Waterton; and airways staff.
- 1943 July - invited to an afternoon Tea Party at Buckingham Palace by H.M. The Queen.
- 1944 - married Thomas William Evans (30<sup>th</sup> September) and resigned from the W.L.A. (30<sup>th</sup> October) - lived in Pencoed thereafter.

With her long-time friend from Pencoed Hostel days – Ivy Thomas – she organised many Women's Land Army reunions, the last of which was 28<sup>th</sup> June 1997 at the Agricultural College in Pencoed (attended by around 100 Land Girls)

- 1997 - paid a first (surprise) visit to Plasisaf Farm in 55 years – the farm is now run by the boy who was 9 years old when Rosina was their new Land Girl. In answer to her question "Do you remember who I am?", without prompting he suggested "It's Rosina isn't it?"



Rosina Evans (nee Davies) 1914-2003

### My experience in the Women's Land Army

*I believe I learned more, saw more and felt more in those few years than in the rest of my life...*

### Those funny and serious years

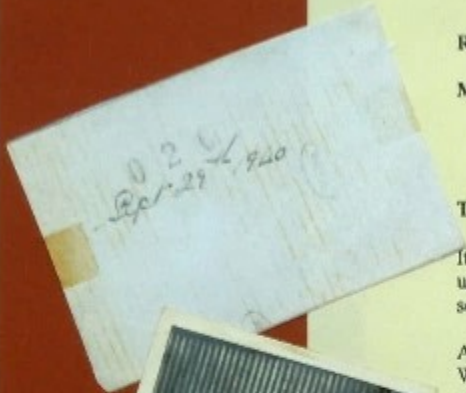
It was in June 1940 when I realised that a number of girls of my age were being called up for the Services (as, of course "There was a War on" – a phrase that we heard several times most days...).

As I was a farmer's daughter (now working in town), I decided to volunteer for the Women's Land Army (W.L.A.). I had always been fond of horses and dogs – though my Dad reminded me that these animals did not contribute a lot towards one's living. Cows and I were not very partial to one another but I was to learn later that they seemed to be the *only* animals that were worth something, and I would have a lot to do with them.

In spite of all the discouraging words from most of my friends *and my employer*, I did not hesitate for one moment to sign the form (when it arrived by post one morning in June 1940) to become a member of the W.L.A.. The Representative for the district was the most encouraging – she was *certain* I could do the work. One friend '*admired* my pluck' as she put it. She was sure I would not remain an ordinary working Land Girl for long. To this remark I replied "Have you ever heard of promotions in the W.L.A.? One just joins as a Land Girl and remains a Land Girl. The only move she is likely to make is from one farm to another where the farmer might be better or worse than the last."

On Saturday morning of July 6<sup>th</sup> I received a post card bearing my Land Army number, and a telegram asking me to report for work and one month's training at a farm on the following Monday. So, on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1940, I was travelling to the farm, quite confident that I was going to like the work.

The farm was in the centre of a village so the land was on each side of the village. The family consisted of four children aged from 2 to 10 years old. One servant man (Walter) and some casual labour were there with the farmer and his wife. When I arrived at about 3.30 pm, the family were having their tea. I was welcomed and told that my uniform had not arrived, but would be sent as soon as possible. How disappointing - after all, wearing a pair of breeches and green pullover (uniform) was going to be part of the 'fun'! There was nothing for it but to turn out in a dress.



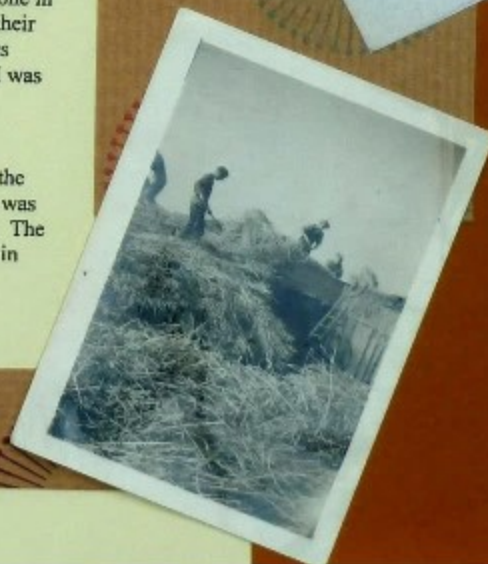
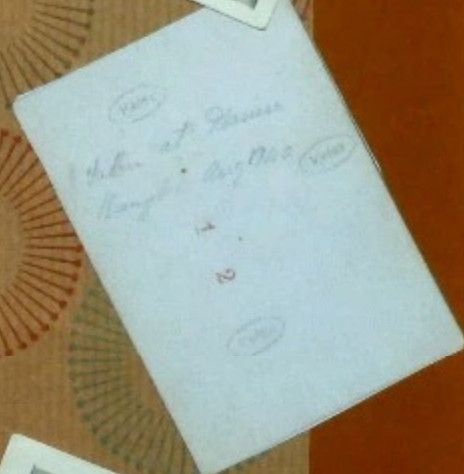
After tea I asked for something to do, so from 4.15 on that day my work began. First of all, there were pigs to feed. The 'swill' (milk, water and any other suitable liquid) was kept in a large barrel or butt at the lower end of the yard. The two buckets seemed nearly as big as me. I was to pour some meal in these buckets and fill them up with 'swill'. On approaching the pigs sty, I heard the most deafening noise of pigs squealing and grunting. I began to wonder what I had let myself in for. How was I going to enter this 'mad-house'? Was life ever going to be the same again? It did not seem safe to enter, but I had 'signed the form' and therefore *had* to get on with it. The pigs were so anxious for their meal that they kept knocking the bucket - and me - until half the contents were spilt.

That job over, I was told I could try my hand at milking *by hand*. This did not frighten me as I had tried my hand at milking before and I knew I could do a little. Later, calves had to be fed but they were better trained than the pigs. Although they were just as eager to get their heads in the bucket, they took their turns.

That first night, sleep was slow in coming. I wondered what work the next day had in store for me. But 6.00 am came far too soon, getting up and out to the cowshed where Walter was already washing the cows' udders ready for milking (I don't know what time Walter got up as the cows spent the nights in the fields at this time of year). After milking and 'cooling' the milk (this was a process of the milk running over corrugated steel which had cold water running through it). The milk had to be put in 10 gallon churns which had to be taken out to a stand for collection by lorries to reach the large dairies by 7.30 am. The milk utensils had to be washed, calves and pigs fed, and then in the house to a wonderful breakfast of home cured ham (which tasted delicious). At 9.00 am my first field job had to be tackled. Very few people would even guess what that was - accompanied by Walter, a gentleman in his 70s, I was to cut thistles with a scythe. I had seen plenty of thistles before but never in such quantity nor *such rich thick* specimens as grew in that field. The Scots would have been proud of them!! The first half hour was not too bad, apart from the time when the point of the scythe would persist in going into the earth. After half an hour or so, the scythe seemed to get heavier and I was so pleased when the old gent suggested sharpening it - at least it meant a few minutes break.

Dinner time came *none* too early. My arms hardly belonged to me, and every bone in my body ached. I could have cried. In the kitchen the children had arrived for their midday meal and to have another look at THEIR Land Girl. Anyone who knows children, can imagine their pride in 'owning' the first Land Girl in the district. I was really 'theirs'. I had to be so careful what I said to them as I knew it would be repeated in school.

At this time, Land Girls were very few and far between, so, needless to say, for the first few weeks, I was the centre of attraction for the schoolchildren, as indeed I was for the adults - but they were more discreet. I was the only Land Girl for miles. The children would stand and look at me, open-mouthed as if this Land Girl dressed in dungarees should be anything but a human being.



During these first few weeks the weather was very hot. Being fair-skinned and not used to being out in the open air so much, I got rather sunburnt (have you ever been burnt and can't bear the slightest touch on your arms and neck? That was how I felt). Whilst milking the cows, they would 'flick' their tails to 'swat' the flies, and at the same time touch or rather 'hit' my arms. I would almost faint each time it happened, but work must go on, hadn't I signed that form?!!

My first month gave me intensive training in farm work. One morning we had to collect the sheep for dipping – a process where you catch each sheep and immerse it in a big trough containing some chemical to keep the flies off (sheep can become infected with maggots). A few neighbouring farmers had come to 'help' and I suspect to see how this 'girl' was shaping up. It was rather a mucky job as the ground was wet at the time. For the first hour, catching the sheep was fairly easy as there were so many of them in the pen, but when we came to the last 20 or so, we had to do some chasing in the muck. Several times I slipped on my bottom in the mud - much to the amusement of the farmers. I suspect that was why I was left on my own to catch the last few sheep.

One compensation for being on this farm was that they had a very good orchard and I love apples. They had one tree of what we called 'pear apple' (a russet apple branch had been grafted to a pear tree, or *vice versa*). They were very hard and delicious, and I am pleased to say plentiful.

[Perhaps I ought to mention that there were evacuees from London and Liverpool billeted at houses in the village. One of them, 9 year old Billy, had fallen head over heels in love with me, and did promise to marry me when he would be grown up (I wonder where he is now?) However, Billy was like my shadow. Everywhere I went, Billy was there wanting to help me. One day when I had eaten more apples than was good for me, I suffered the consequences. Poor Billy was in such a state because I was ill, he clung to me more than ever. When I had to make for the toilet he stood by the door - I'm sure, in case I needed help!!]

My month's training was nearly over, but my employer asked if he could keep me for another two months. This request was granted, so I was there for three months in all. During that time jobs were varied and plentiful.



When my employer went away one morning, he asked me to go and see some heifers in one of the fields. A surprise awaited me – I found one heifer that had calved prematurely, so I had a problem on my hands – how to get mother and son home. The calf was very small and not able to walk. I decided to carry the calf, hoping 'mother' would follow at a slight distance. 'Mother' had different ideas!! She objected to me picking up her son, so I had to drop him every time she came too near because I didn't like the look in her eye. There was nothing for it but to pick him up when his mother was not looking and make as many strides as I could in the direction of the farm before mother saw me, and I would have to drop him again. I can't say how long this method took me to get cow/calf towards the farm. My last stint was taking me past the back door of the farm house. As I passed the door, the little 2 year old farmer's daughter appeared. On seeing her, the cow 'dived' in her direction. Believe me, I was horrified – I threw the calf between little Connie and the cow and ran for Connie. To my relief, the cow stopped with the calf and I was able to take Connie indoors. This young cow had not quite finished with me though. She still had to be tied up and milked. This was a new experience for her and she objected until she eventually succeeded to land one right on target and I went headlong in the 'cow muck'. This was the state I was in when the farmer returned. Much to my annoyance, he had a good laugh when he saw such a 'spectacle'. He did however relent when his wife told him that I had probably saved his daughter's life that afternoon.

When my three months was up, I must say I was sad to leave; I had made so many friends in that short period. People would send invitations for me to come to supper and, invariably, the farmer's wife accompanied me, and became a great friend of mine.

Towards the end of the three months, I was called to the County office to discuss my next move. Letters were shown to me from 'would-be' employers from various counties of South Wales. I chose a place in Pembrokeshire (because I had a very good friend living near there). This was not to be – the County Officer handed me a letter from a farmer outside Cardiff and told me to report there on the following Monday. Hmm, so much for *my* choice!!

On my arrival at the farm I was greeted by a very sceptical gentleman aged 70 odd, who gave me an outline of the work I would have to do. This entailed feeding and milking 20 cows by hand morning and evening, helping to clean out the cowsheds and stables, groom horses, work with horses on ploughed ground and any other farm work required of me. On my first evening, I was told of several Land Girls who had been sent there to work but had left after a few days. If I was depressed at being given my list of chores, I was more so when I was told of these other girls who could not stand the pace. After just *one* day driving two horses to cultivate some ground, I understood why all those girls had left – the old gent would stand in the field watching procedures and would 'shout', 'bawl' or complain if I missed or overlapped a bit of ground. I could cheerfully have packed my bags!!



While I was in the dining room that evening, I overheard one of his daughters ask her Dad what he thought of his new Land Girl. This was too much to miss, so I eavesdropped for the reply. To my astonishment he said "Wonderful. She is doing very well indeed." I could not resist entering the kitchen and commenting on his remark as I thought I must have been unsatisfactory. He smiled at me and said "Oh don't take too much notice of me love when I rant and rave. That is my way. Yes I am very pleased with you." What a relief!! From then on we were the best of friends.

After supper every night it was a ritual - we played bridge. Once they had taught me the game, I could shout and quarrel as good as any of them over a game of cards. We used to laugh so much once the game was over, but *during* the game we were enemies.

After four months I contracted 'dermatitis' through milking the cows. My hands were in a bit of a mess; but as they were so short-handed, I stuck it out as long as I could. When the skin was peeling away from the back of my hands, I had to go to hospital for treatment. By the time I entered hospital, from my knuckles to my elbows was just raw flesh. They patched me up in hospital but warned me not to milk cows again, as this trouble would probably recur even up to 20 years later.

It now had to be a new chapter in my Land Army life because, on that farm, cows were so important and I was forbidden to handle them. While I was home convalescing from this trouble, a letter arrived asking me to travel to Cardiff to start the first 'Mobile Gang' in Wales. This meant that I would be employed by the War Agricultural Committee of Glamorgan as a Forewoman in charge of a dozen girls. I was given a large Citroen car to drive the girls to various farms and instruct them in the work to be done. This car was big, and I was rather small. Many a time people remarked that they had seen this car on the road and thought it was travelling by 'remote control': they could not see the driver. It was a grand car though.

Most of the farmers who employed the 'Mobile Gang' were market gardeners (no more cows!). We were billeted in houses in the Fairwater area of Cardiff. I would pick them up in the morning and take them to a point where we met the Labour Officer. He had the list of farms we had to work on. We planted, picked, bagged, clamped, sorted and loaded potatoes, bunched beetroot, carrots etc. etc. as well as cutting, tying, hauling, stacking and threshing corn. The Citroen soon got too small to transport land girls (our numbers were increasing) and I drove all sorts of vehicles from an 8 cwt. van to a 4 ton lorry and even a bus. When I was driving a lorry, I had to use a brick for my foot to rest on so that I could reach the pedals: I was too short to reach without some help. I must mention here that *none* of these vehicles was new, we used old 'bangers' (crocks) from anywhere. One van we had was an old laundry van and on the front were the words 'Don't kill your wife, we can do it.' When these words applied to a laundry van, they made some sort of sense; but when you saw about 20 land girls emerging from it you wondered whether they were being taken to the slaughter house!!!



Glamorgan War Agricultural  
Executive Committee.

### DRIVING PASS

This is to Certify that

MISS ROSINA DEWIS  
being an Officer of this Committee,  
is authorised to drive a vehicle, the  
property of H.M. Government,  
which is exempt from tax.

*E. H. Harrop*  
Executive Officer.

GLAMORGAN W.A.S.C.  
9, Finsbury Place, Cardiff.



*Parcel Land Girls  
Maudie Ford! Dolores Johnson! Lucy  
Wells! Valerie Cross! Rosina Dewis! Peggy  
Johnston! Margaret Wilson &  
Gleadow Thomas.*



These old vehicles were not always as obliging as they might be, but who cared, there were always enough of us to *push* until the vehicle was somehow started again. One morning whilst travelling along Western Avenue (to meet the Labour Officer), our van decided it had had enough and came to a standstill outside the entrance to the Army Camp. We thought we might be out of petrol (petrol gauges never seemed to work). After pondering a while, one girl had a brilliant idea – “Why don’t we ask the army for some petrol – we all work for the government” she said. This was worth a try so I marched up to the sentry at the gate with my ‘tale of woe’. He referred me to the corporal who in turn passed me on to the sergeant and so on. By the time I had reached the Sub Lieutenant, his superior could not be found and, after some pleading, the Sub decided to take a chance and give us two gallons of petrol - on the understanding that we would refund the petrol that evening. When the last pint of petrol was being poured in, the Lieutenant arrived and ‘wiped the floor’ with his Sub-Lieutenant and us. What a vocabulary!! To make matters worse, our van still would not oblige so we could not get out of his way without ‘pushing’. We were pushing out of the entrance when we were greeted by the Labour Officer who had come to look for us. My word, he could outshine the Lieutenant in vocabulary!! I had no idea there were so many ‘swear’ words before!!! There were a lot of ‘humble’ and red faced Land Girls walking up to that Army sentry that evening to return two gallons of petrol...

So many funny incidents happened during this time -- it would take too long to mention them all ...

When the Citroen car would not oblige one morning, I got the starting handle to ‘crank’ it. It ‘kicked back’ and dislocated my elbow. One of the girls (who said she had done some first aid) pulled it back. We then went to find a doctor. The first one we found happened to be a bone setter. We got him out of bed. He examined my arm, informed me how very very lucky I was and asked me never again to let anyone pull a limb back as it could have ruined the limb. He sent me straight home by train with instructions not to use the arm again for a few weeks. He needn’t have worried – it was too painful to use it.

During this period, our ‘Mobile Gang’ increased in number. Amongst them were ballet dancers, shop assistants, secretaries, typists etc.

One day I was sent along with others to help with corn cutting. There was more than a fair share of thistles in the corn, and when the thistles are harvested in the corn they are inclined to break off when they enter your flesh. I spent every evening with a needle, removing these thistles from my hands. After the cutting came the hauling, stacking and later, threshing. Every process gave me the same evening ‘pastime’ – removing thistles. One morning I was asked to return to Cardiff after transporting the Land Girls to the farms, take a lorry and convey some corn to the mills at Cardiff Docks. Whilst helping to unload the sacks, I discovered once more that thistles were coming through the sacks. I began to wonder whether one day my tongue would be pricked when eating bread!!



*Land Girls  
at Penarth Hostel*



*Rpt to right  
Elsie Davis & Margonia Owen! Winnie Doyle &  
Margonia Owen  
Taken at Llangynydd  
April 1945*



My life was saved one day whilst using a potato sorter. A potato sorter is a machine which sorts the seed (smaller) potatoes from the (large) eaters. The potatoes travel up along a grid. We had to lean over a spindle to pick out any stones or rotten potatoes as they came along. Whilst I was doing this, the spindle caught in my belt - I gave out a scream. One of the men heard me (and since the leather belt was tightening and would probably have strangled me) he switched off the engine. Phew!

Whilst at that same farm one day, it snowed heavily. We were advised to leave early as the lane leading from the farm was very steep and would become very slippery and treacherous. I asked the girls to walk the half mile or so to where the ground was flatter, but they wanted to travel in the lorry, so, with my heart in my mouth I 'slithered' down to safety. I don't know if it was faith in the driver that made them ride in the lorry or was it laziness that stopped them walking the half mile to safety!

#### Sully

The land on which we grew a potato crop at Sully was between the sea and a row of bungalows. Along the sea were land mines so we had to keep at a safe distance. One day, our Labour Officer's little Yorkshire terrier was seen wandering towards that area. You should have seen us running and the officer shouting at little 'Punch'. When there was an air raid on, one of the bungalow residents used to call us in. She was great - always a cup of tea or coffee. She turned out to be a friend of the 'Prince of Wales' - the Duke of Windsor. We heard so many tales of the Duke.

#### Gower

With all the corn growing, the rats and rabbits were becoming a menace. This was a sign of another *move* for us. We were formed and trained to be a 'Pest Gang' to gas rabbits and rats in the Gower area, as this was the worst affected region. You could see very large areas of young corn literally eaten away. Many acres of corn were affected. This decision to set up a Pest Gang was taken without taking into account of the opposition which would come from sportsmen, Estate owners and their 'keepers'. Everywhere we went, we found a keeper peering at us over the hedge. Articles were printed in the local papers - about the Land Girls who were destroying rabbits - food for human consumption, when there was a war on and food was scarce. The result was that I had to carry a 'warrant' in my pocket whenever we were gassing rabbits. After a few months, due to a number of rabbit trappers and the gassing, the numbers of rabbits and rats dwindled and were no longer the threat they had been, so once more, we were due for a change.

The Gower farmers took some persuading to employ us to work on their farms, as they were sure 'Girls' could not stand the pace!!! One farmer agreed to start us off, on the understanding that we would 'leave after a week should we be unsatisfactory'. Wait until you hear what our first job was... he admitted to us that he had not cleared the 'muck' from the farm yard for 13 years. Our task was to remove this enormous 'heap'. He would supply a cart and two horses - one in front of the other. None of these girls had handled horses before (except me, as a farmer's daughter) so my duty was to teach them, and between us clear this heap. Our reputation also depended upon this...

Volvo Volvo  
 Dolores Johnson, Venus Carr & Margaret  
 Milton, Land Girls gassing Rabbit  
 & Rat at Oxwich  
 Volvo

#### ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY, BRIDGEND

PASS TO DANGER AREA Pass No. **G 3044**  
 ADMIT **Annie R Davies**  
 of **Island War Agric Committee**  
 to Danger Area in Group **S All** for the  
 purpose of **Lifting potatoes**  
 Available till **18. 11. 43**

Signature of Holder *[Signature]*

This pass is issued subject to the observance of the special conditions authorised for Danger Areas.

It must be presented at the Shifting House, or other entrance, at each entry, and must be surrendered there on the completion of the work for which the pass was issued.

THIS PASS IS NOT VALID UNLESS BEARING THE OFFICIAL STAMP AND SIGNED BY THE HOLDER.

IT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE.

(5572) - W220/174/201 - 40 (15-11-43) D.P. 454

*Land Girls at Cowes*



GLAMORGAN WAR AGRICULTURAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEFENCE (GENERAL) REGULATIONS 1939

The Rabbits Order, 1940

The Glamorgan War Agricultural Executive Committee in the exercise of the powers conferred upon them by the Rabbits Order, 1940, hereby authorise

One Gassing Team of three girls and Post Officer  
(Field Nos:- 297, 306,  
to enter upon the land situate at Oxwich Woods 307A, 309 (1915)  
in the parish of Oxwich in the administrative  
county of Glamorgan for the purpose of killing and taking  
the rabbits upon such land by means of Gassing  
during the period expiring on the 5th February, 1942.

XX

W

Dated 21st January, 1942.

By Order of the Committee.

*W. E. Harvey*  
Executive Officer.

9 Fitzalan Place,  
CARDIFF.

*Made good  
in 1954  
Rabbit picking*

45



Removing this heap meant forking or shovelling (by hand) the manure on the cart depositing it in small *heaps* on the field and later spreading it again with forks. All this work was manual, not mechanical. Well, we succeeded; and henceforth, we were in great demand in that area.

As you probably know, the Gower farmers grow a lot of early potatoes, so I think we spent 75% of our time on potatoes in some form or another. By the time we had cut early potatoes for sprouting and planted the later crops, the early ones were ready for lifting. Any 'in-between times' were spent on our knees weeding onions grown from seed or hoeing.

By this time our Gower gang had grown to 21 in number. I only had one van to transport them, so we all had to get into this one van. We had to be methodical in loading the van - the first girls to be dropped had to be last in the van, and so on, as they were sitting across and on top of one another. They were always 'Happy' then and 'always singing'. One of the favourites was Calon Lan.

On the way home one day one girl (who was from West Ham in London) asked why we had not sung the song 'Annie Rose'. This got me very puzzled as I was not aware of Annie Rose. After some discussion, I asked if she could sing a bit or hum it. I must say I was very surprised to learn that it was none other than Calon Lan. The last lines of Calon Lan is 'Canu'r dydd a chanu'r nos'. To a cockney, the 'chanu'r nos' was Annie Rose!! Since then it's Annie Rose...

In those days, our warden at the hostel was very fond of preparing rabbit for our meals. The big drawback was that she believed in keeping them like pheasants before cooking them, with the result that they were rather 'high' before they reached our tables. In fact, they were too 'strong' for us to eat them most of the time, so big portions were left on our plates. In fact, the girls reckoned that they could sing 'Home Sweet Home again', without watching the road, they could smell rabbits when about a mile from home.

The girls were 'sick' of rabbit - I certainly was. On two mornings every week I had to collect rabbits from the trappers and take them to the Swansea butchers as well as to the Hostels. Sometimes the trappers would ask me to help kill them. This was one 'chore' I failed to do, much to the trappers' disgust. I could not kill those funny little animals. Gassing them was different as then you did not see nor handle them.

During this period we were having sandwiches to eat for our midday meal. They were revolting - we used to scrape the filling off and eat the bread. We could not find out what the filling was. One morning I doubled back to the Hostel about 11.00 am and found the warden *mincing* the rabbit left on our plates from the night before. I asked if this was the filling in our sandwiches. After another reminder that 'there was a war on' and 'we must not waste food', I had to report the matter to our authorities. Things improved after that.

When I was taken ill at this Hostel, my doctor advised me to take a few weeks off. On my first day back there was a message waiting for me from the Labour Officer - I had to ring him immediately. I was to choose a girl to take over from me in Gower, pack a few things and travel to Pencoed immediately. On the following Friday, he would accompany me back to Pennard to collect the rest of my belongings.



*Left to right  
Evelyn Jones; Lisa Aust; Miss Pauline; Louise Davies  
& Margaret Owen  
Taken outside Pencoed Hostel.  
April 20<sup>th</sup> 1943*



He had sent 80 girls to a hostel at Pencoed, and put a girl in charge. After one day, she had arrived at the office crying and saying that she was 'having cheek' from these girls and could not carry on. If I agreed to come to Pencoed, he would give me my old favourite Citroen car again. This time I was to be promoted to Assistant Labour Officer. In this role, I had to call on farmers to find work for the girls, accept and check all their time sheets and pay them on a Thursday evening. The numbers were increased from 80 to 150 in a very short time and added to them were two more hostels – Bonvilston (40 girls) and Llantwit Major (20 girls) – in all, over 200 land girls.

#### Pencoed Hostel

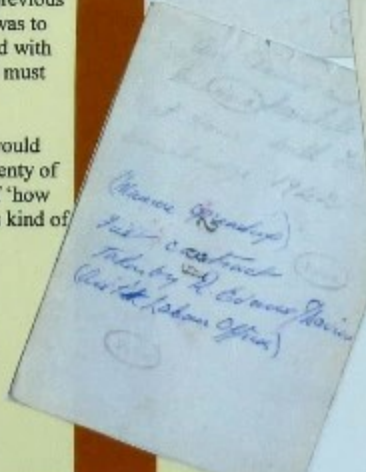
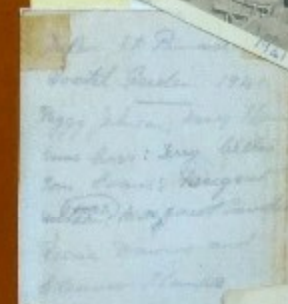
Another big chapter in my life. During my stay at Pencoed Hostel, I had the privilege of visiting Buckingham Palace.

This period as Assistant Labour Officer I greeted with great apprehension. To be told that another person had packed in the job, because of cheek etc and after the first day, made me wonder what I was in for. I arrived at the Hostel to find 2,000 residents of all ages, descriptions, occupations, professions and 'you name it we had them' at Pencoed. I had led a rather sheltered life at home, but Pencoed Hostel showed me 'how the other half lived'.

I was given a few lorries and vans as well as *men* drivers to take the 80 land girls to various farms from Pentyrch to Llantwit Major, Pyle, Blackmill, Llantrisant, Ynys-y-bwl and Llanwonno. Jobs were varied and most of the girls inexperienced. So our girls (many of whom had never soiled their hands – ballet dancers, typists, secretaries, shop assistants) had to learn to put up with muck on their faces, mud on their gum boots and blisters on their hands.

One day, having sent the lorries off to their respective farms, I was driving along the 'Golden Mile' when I saw four land girls walking towards me. Being new at Pencoed, I wasn't sure whether they were from there, but I took a chance, stopped and asked them where they were going. They admitted having walked away from a farm on the St Mary Hill Road 'because the farmer had sworn at them'. I took them straight to another farm for the afternoon while I intended to check on their complaint the next day. The following morning, when the girls were on the lorries, I heard some of the 'worst' bad language I had ever heard coming from the direction of one lorry. On investigation, I discovered that the 'culprit' was one of the four, who the previous day, had walked away from a farm because of bad language. My next move was to take her and her friends to the farm (that they had walked off) and have a word with the farmer. I had to convince him that they would not walk away again, and I must admit these girls did not give me much trouble after that.

Having said that, some of the girls were up to every trick in the book. They would study the medical books for symptoms for a certain complaint (illness), put plenty of powder on their faces, and go to the doctor giving him the list of symptoms of 'how they suffered'. The result – a Doctor's certificate for at least a week off. This kind of behaviour worried me at the time as it followed a pattern.



the  
MEN'S

My job

One week, on return to work, I had a long talk with two friends who were in the habit of being ill at the same time. I explained to them how inconvenient it was when two friends always became ill at the same time, and therefore, should it happen again I would have to recommend they be moved away – possibly to the forces. Within two months, I promoted one of them to 'Forewoman', and I'm glad to say that I'd had the last ('faked') illness from these two.

#### Saturday mornings off

All sorts of 'faked' reasons were given for asking for Saturday mornings off. Some were allowed (depending how convinced I was), others refused. One Friday evening, two friends approached me for a Saturday morning off. I wondered what 'reason' was forthcoming from two friends. However, they smiled and said "We had hoped to go for a picnic." They were very surprised when their request was granted 'because of their honesty'.

Within a year, there were 150 girls at Pencoed Hostel; and by then I was also responsible for 40 girls at a Bonvilston Hostel and another 20 at Llantwit Major. Altogether over 200 land girls. Thank goodness, they worked very well (on the whole) and farmers used to ring up asking for them. There were times, however, when I had to approach the farmers to employ them. I would drive around the country and if I saw some manure that should be spread or hedges needing cutting, I would call on the farm, and approach the farmer.

On one of my visits to our Cardiff office, I was handed a letter asking for Land Girls to spread manure on contract. This was new as I had never given a price for a job (the girls had always been paid by the hour). The Labour Officer gave me a rough estimate on pricing a contract – "charge approximately 1/- a load" he said. Off I went, and was shown a field full of little 'tumps' of manure. I couldn't possibly start counting the heaps in order to work out how many loads, so there was nothing for it but to give a price and 'pray'. To my amazement, the farmer accepted my price. Farmers, in general, 'haggle' over prices, so I was convinced that I had under-priced. I collected six girls and told them that if they did this job, to the farmer's satisfaction, in so many days, they would have one day off with pay. They did it – and had that day off.

When the gang got very big, I appointed 7 forewomen at Pencoed, 2 at Bonvilston and 1 at Llantwit Major. This eased the work a great deal, but we still had one problem – men drivers. None of the girls could drive, so I asked the Labour Officer if they could be paid during the period I would spend teaching them to drive. He agreed to pay each girl for two days if I could teach them in that time. There was nothing for it but to take each girl out for two whole days and hope for the best. In all, each would have about 16 hours tuition – a bit nerve-racking for the girls and me, but we succeeded, and on the third day, the girl would drive other girls to work. I would follow later in my car, in part to make sure she had arrived safely. In a short time, we had drivers for all our vehicles and some 'spares'. They drove anything from 8 cwt vans to 5 ton lorries, and even a bus. One of those learner drivers succeeded in doing something that I have never known anyone do before or since – we were travelling up a gradient, and I asked her to change from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> gear. In the process, she moved the gear level too far over and, without any grinding, got it into reverse and we suddenly 'lunged' backwards! I'm not sure which of us was most surprised!!

Left to right  
Margoni Bowen; Olois Davies; Bym Matthews  
Winnie Doyle  
Taken at Llangynwyl.  
April 1903.



How many of you remember the length of a chain. How many square yards in an acre etc? When I went to price a contract for hedging, the only guide I had was 'approximately 1/- to 1/6 a yard, depending on the kind of hedge. On approaching the hedge, the farmer asked "How much a chain are you going to charge me?". My mind went blank for a few minutes, so I stalled by mumbling to myself "If I make it so much a 'perch'...". He jumped in with the answer for a chain if I charged so much for a 'perch' - little did he know how grateful I was to him!

On another occasion I had to take and price a contract for hoeing Swedes. The farmer said it was 1/2 an acre. I thought it was more, so he told me to measure it if I disbelieved him. I was prepared - as Assistant Labour Officer, I wore my own private clothes (not a uniform) and I had a skirt which allowed me to stride 1 yard. I was able to measure the field of Swedes which turned out to be 3/4 of an acre!

A farmer outside Pencoed had several hedges cut by Land Girls, so I took one of the men up one day to help me measure. He was to hold one end of the chain, the farmer the other end and I had the note book. I noticed the farmer was holding the chain at arm's length therefore gaining the length of his arm each time. After measuring about 6 chain lengths I told the farmer "That makes it 6 chains 6 yards". "How do you get that" he said. "Because every time you hold your arm out I add a yard" I said. He behaved himself after that!!

On visiting a farm on my way home one evening, I was rather surprised to find the girls still there threshing corn and it was getting dark. I explained to the farmer that the girls were not insured after 5.00 pm, so if anything happened, he would have to be responsible. He got rather abusive and accused me of trying to show my authority when probably I knew nothing about farm work, got this job because of who I knew etc. etc. However, some time later, I went to price a contract at a farm some miles from there. When I knocked at the door, a farmer appeared. As soon as he saw me, he smiled and told me that he was the farmer on the farm where the girls were threshing into the evening. He apologised to me for his rudeness on that evening. Better late than never I suppose!!

On my rounds one day, I discovered some girls in trouble with a potato picking machine. They had driven the tractor and machine into a corner and could not get out. I jumped on the tractor and tried to reverse, so that the tractor would push the digger backwards. Whilst reversing, the hitch slipped and my foot was being crushed between tractor and digger. My other foot was on the clutch. If I weakened the pressure on the clutch, the tractor would crush my foot worse, so I gave one 'heave' and managed to get it out of gear but my foot was too painful to drive home. None of those girls could drive. I chose one of them, asked her to sit in the driver's seat, and obey every order I gave her whilst I steered home. You should have heard us!! Iris had her first driving lesson very unexpectedly.



Have you ever had days when *nothing* goes right? I called on a gang who were hauling and spreading 'lime' with a *three-wheeled* tractor and trailer. The tractor had stopped so I went to 'crank' it. These three-wheeler tractors were rather high and I was short. Whilst turning the handle, it 'kicked', flung back and hit me in the ribs. I was not aware of it *then*, but the result was a 'cracked rib'. From there I went to another farm only to find the tractor had run into a 'dingle', and had to have two tractors to haul it out. Again, on the same afternoon, at another farm where a gang was hauling lime with a horse and cart, I arrived in time to see the horse running away with the cart. By this time, my side was very painful, but I had promised to pick up a friend on the way to see a threshing gang at Porthcawl. Every time I turned the steering wheel on a bend, I was in agony. At the farm I had to ask one of the Land Girls to turn the car round, and after a cup of tea at a 'café' in Porthcawl my friend (who had never touched a steering wheel) had to steer on every bend whilst I did the controls. Back to the hostel, and straight to Dr Chong who 'strapped me up' for a few weeks.

Can you beat that little record of bad luck in one day?!!!

There was the time when I was summoned to the Land Army Head Office in Cardiff. After a long talk on secrecy because 'there was a war on', I was asked to keep the date July 3<sup>rd</sup> free. About half an hour later, I was eventually told why - I had been chosen to go to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, but I must not tell a soul until my return. That took a lot of the enjoyment out of my trip. Nevertheless, it was a good day - I was presented to Princess (now Queen) Elizabeth, Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother (then the Queen); visited the kitchen garden etc





{W.L.A. pay - during the first month's training, personal allowance of 10/- a week less national health and Unemployment Insurance cards. If you wanted a tie, you pay 1/9 for it - trousers, buy (optional 8/- a pair). After one month's training, wages 32/- per (42 hour) week less board and lodgings (16/-). Supplied with uniforms, but had to provide under clothes and any other.

IN THE COUNTY OF GLAMORGAN—PETTY SESSIONAL DIVISION OF CAERPHILLY TOWNSHIP.

To ANNE ROSINA DAVIES,

of ~~54, Tudor Close, Fairwater, Cardiff.~~ *The Cafe, Penarth, Southgate, Swansea.*

INFORMATION has been laid before the undersigned this day by HOWELL REES, Superintendent of Police, for that on the **Twentieth** day of **DECEMBER** 19 **41** at the Parish of Eglwysilan, ~~Swansea~~ in the County of Glamorgan, on a certain road, namely, **Rudry Road, Caerphilly**, -----you unlawfully drove a Motor **-lorry** without due care and attention, contrary to Section 12 of the Road Traffic Act, 1930.

YOU ARE THEREFORE hereby summoned to appear before the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, sitting at the Petty Sessional Court House, at Caerphilly in the County of Glamorgan, on Tuesday the ~~twentieth~~ **17<sup>th</sup>** day of ~~DECEMBER~~ *March* 19 **42** at the hour of 10 in the Forenoon, to answer to the said Information.

DATED the **16th** day of **FEBRUARY** 19 **42**.

*E. Williams*



Judges of the Peace for the County of Glamorgan.

ANNE ROSINA DAVIES,

*The Cafe*  
54 Tudor Close,  
Fairwater,  
Southgate  
CARDIFF.

Driving m-lorry without due care and attention.

*have you all  
at the lounge*

*Left to right (front row) Jan Davies, Sylvia Hughes, (London) Hannah Jones, Betty Williams, Lily Jackson.*

*.. (Back row) May Morgan, Maria Hughes, Betty Williams, Sue Jones, Betty Jackson, Margaret Clarke, Nani Lister, Betty Jones, Jan Davies.*



Telephone: Cardiff 8229, 1, 2, 3, 4.  
**WAR AGRICULTURAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
 COUNTY OF GLAMORGAN

Chairman:  
 HENRY ALEXANDER, J.P.  
 Executive Officer:  
 E. L. HARRY, M.Sc.

To avoid delay please quote  
 this reference in your reply:  
 Our Ref. **JGY/NL/STAFF 407**  
 Your Ref. \_\_\_\_\_

9, FITZALAN PLACE,  
 CARDIFF.

17th November 1944.

Mrs. R. Evans

Dear Madam,

With reference to your letter, my  
 Committee have reluctantly agreed to accept  
 your resignation as from and including the  
 30th ~~November~~ <sup>October</sup> 1944. to finish on 30/11/44

Yours faithfully,

*E. L. Harry*  
 EXECUTIVE OFFICER



NUMBER		SURNAME	
XD GC 193: 2		EVANS, R.	
CHRISTIAN NAMES (Print only if full)			
Anne R.			
CLASS CODE			
A.			
FULL POSTAL ADDRESS			
The Hotel Rencoe, N. Bridgend, Glam.			
HOLDER'S SIGNATURE			
A. R. Evans			
CHANGES OF ADDRESS. No entry except by National Registration Officer, to whom removal must be notified.			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
3, Marlborough Rd, Cardiff			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
By Myself, Helindia Rd, Rencoe, N. Bridgend			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			

FOR OFFICIAL ENTRY ONLY. Entry from Holder's Signature. ANY OTHER ENTRY OR ANY ALTERATION, MARKING OR ERASURE IS PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OR IMPRISONMENT OR BOTH.

NOTICE **GK 734659**

1. Always carry your Identity Card. You must produce it on demand by a Police Officer in uniform or member of H.M. Armed Forces in uniform on duty.
2. You are responsible for this Card, and must not part with it to any other person. You must report at once to the local National Registration Office if it is lost, destroyed, damaged or defaced.
3. If you find a lost Identity Card or have in your possession a Card not belonging to yourself or anyone in your charge you must hand it at once at a Police Station or National Registration Office.
4. Any breach of these requirements is an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment or both.

FOR AUTHORISED ENDORSERS ONLY

**NATIONAL  
 REGISTRATION  
 IDENTITY  
 CARD**

*Land Army Re-Union at Pwllheli Hotel*



WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

Glamorgan County Committee

EXHIBITION

APRIL 4th-11th, 1946.

THE COUNTESS OF PLYMOUTH and  
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE request the pleasure of  
the company of

*Mrs J. Evans*

to support

THE LORD MAYOR OF CARDIFF (Alderman W. R. WILLS, J.P.)  
who will open THE EXHIBITION

at

Messrs. James Howell & Co. Ltd., Cardiff,  
11.30 a.m. Thursday, April 4th.

R.S.V.P.

ENTRANCE: WHARFON STREET

*W. L. A. Re-Union  
at Pwllheli Hotel  
Llan-*

*Sept - 1952*



# Pencoed College



*Centre of Excellence*

Principal : J D B Thomas, BSc., DFM, ARAgrS.

111 Heol Croesty  
Pencoed  
Bridgend  
CF45 5LT

Tel: 01656 860611

25 April 1997

Mrs R Evans  
111 Heol Croesty  
Pencoed  
Bridgend  
CF35 5LT

Dear Mrs Evans

It is with great pleasure that we are writing to you at this time. Mr John Thomas, Principal of Pencoed College, has kindly invited all ex Land Girls to a reunion at the College (formerly known as Pencoed Demonstration Farm).

The occasion has been timed to coincide with the College Open Day on Saturday 28th June 1997 and would include a free buffet lunch for Land Girls, tour of the College and the use of a function room.

The programme for the day will be:

Coffee on arrival at Pencoed College	-	11.00 a.m.
Short tour of College	-	11.30 a.m.
Buffet lunch in lounge/bar	-	12.00 noon.
Reunion-informal meeting/chat	-	1.00 p.m.

You will be free in the afternoon to attend Open Day, chat in the function room provided, visit the shop or take a leisurely stroll in the College Grounds.

Your friends and family are also invited to Open Day after lunch, when College will be open to the general public from 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

It is our intention to spend some time in the afternoon looking at old photographs and memorabilia. Please bring along anything which you think may be of interest.

■ Pencoed, Bridgend, CF35 5LG  
Telephone (01656) 860202 / 860635  
Fax (01656) 864875



Farmyard friends catch up on 50 years of gossip at reunion

GLAMORGAN GAZETTE JULY 24 1997

# Land girls' golden harvest

WORDS: MICHELLE BOWER  
PICTURES: HOWARD BALSTON

**A DAY** was hardly long enough to catch up on half-a-century's worth of gossip.

But what a day it was! Former Land Army girls Rosina Evans and Ivy Thomas of Pen-coed decided to organise a reunion for old friends to coincide with the agricultural college's open day.

But the event proved such a success that more than 100 old land girls eventually turned up for the nostalgic reunion.

It meant that as well as catching up with old friends, there were many new friends to make, as girls from far and wide turned up to talk about the good old days.

Mrs Evans, nee Davies, who was a land girl from 1940-1944 and lives at Henl Croesty, the site of the old Pen-coed hostel, said it had been a memorable day.

"It really went very, very well indeed. I was very pleased to see so many faces I knew. It was like yesterday," explained Mrs Evans.

"The day just flew by. We really needed much longer."

Mrs Evans said she and Mrs Thomas, nee Silcock, who met when they were both land girls in Pen-coed in the war, had no idea the day would be so successful.

Since then they have had many calls and letters of thanks and praise. It marked a particularly special week for Mrs Evans.

She worked all over South and West Wales, including Cardiff, Pen-coed and the Garw, and became assistant labour officer for more than 200 girls in Bonvilston, Llantwit Major and Pen-coed.

But Mrs Evans is originally from Carmarthenshire and in the same week as the reunion, she decided to contact a farm there that she had first worked on.

"I discovered the farmer and his wife had died but that it was now being run by his son who I had last seen when he was nine.

"When he said to me 'are you Rosina?' and had remembered me after all those years it rounded off a wonderful week for me," she said.



**GOOD OLD DAYS:** Reunion organisers Ivy Thomas and Rosina Evans, both of Pen-coed. This old Citroën car is similar to the one Mrs Evans used to teach the girls to drive. Its appearance at the reunion was laid on as a special surprise for her.

Come on the Services!



Rosina Soars (Dawie)  
&  
Joy Thomas (Selcote)  
Taken on June 27 1997  
at  
Re-union of Ex Landgate  
Memorial to Tom Soars  
in background

Help to Sto  
in's Own



Rosina Evans nee Davies Women's Land Army. Assistant Labour Officer 1940-1944  
Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire

Heol Croesty, Pencoed.

Rosina was living in Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire, West Wales when she enlisted in the Women's Land Army in July 1940. She was sent to Plasisaf, Llanybri, Carms, for her training. In the family of children there aged between 2 and 12 years was a 9 year old boy. In July 1997 Rosina paid a nostalgic return visit to that farm, her first for over 55 years. The farm is now run by that 9 year old boy who, without any prompting from Rosina, and in answer to her question 'do you remember who I am?' replied 'Its Rosina isn't it?'. Quite a remarkable memory from a 9 year old who only knew her for months rather than years, all that time ago.

Upon completion of her training at Plasisaf, Rosina was sent to her first farm 'Cwm Farm, Morganstown, Glamorgan'. It was there after she had been at the farm some months, it was discovered that milking cows was causing severe dermatitis to break out on her hands and arms; so much so that it was decided to move her in to another branch of the WLA.

So in 1941, she was transferred to the Market Gardening Section of the WLA at Cardiff where she was made forewoman. Taking parties of land girls out to various market gardeners and to stately homes where large sections of their grounds, lawns and flowerbeds were being turned over to the cultivation of growing vegetables etc for the Home Market.

Later on that same year, Rosina was moved yet again in to another branch of the WLA – that of pest control. Reports on the vast amount of destruction caused to the wheat and the hay crops in the Gower peninsula by thousands of rabbits – not to mention the damage and waste found in the graineries and barns in the same area by rats – forced the Ministry in to action and the WLA were called in. Rosina, with a team of around 20 land girls were sent in to the area and based at a hostel sited on the cliff tops at Pennard. The girls set about gassing hundreds of rabbits in an organised cull. At the same time the threat caused by rats and mice was also tackled. Even though hundreds of acres of wheat etc were being annually destroyed by the rabbits, Rosina said 'there was still a marked resentment by some local people to the gassing of rabbits being claimed that the action was counterproductive as rabbits were also an alternative food to meat which in those days was strictly rationed and oft times scarce'.

It was in 1942 that Rosina was posted to the Pencoed hostel as assistant Labour Officer. There, in addition to farm work, she also taught the land girls to drive using an old black Citroen saloon car. When asking Rosina whether the Pencoed hostel was custom built for the land army, she replied 'dear me, no – there were about 2000 people based at the hostel'. These included 'Bevan Boys' (Boys conscripted in to mining), workers from the nearby arsenal at Waterton, Bristol airways staff as well as land girls.

As Assistant Labour Officer to the WLA Rosina was responsible for 200 plus land girls – girls not just from this area or even Wales, but from all over the country. About 40 of these were based at Bonvilston, Gower in a custom built hostel where Rosina placed 2 forewomen in charge, teaching these also to drive. Another 20 girls were based in a large old country house in Llantwit Major called the Grange where again Rosina placed a forewoman after giving her too driving lessons. Back in the Pencoed hostel she was also responsible for seeking out contracts from the many and almost any of the wide variety of outlets requiring the assistance of land girls. One of the highlights of her WLA service was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1943 when Rosina was invited to an afternoon tea party at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty The Queen.

In 1944, Rosina married and left the WLA...well...that's not strictly true, for she has never really left, being almost more in touch now, especially the last 12 months, than ever. At a reunion organised by Rosina on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1997 at the Agricultural College in Pencoed almost

100 ex land girls from as far away as Manchester, Somerset, London, Plymouth and Bristol and many parts of Wales turned up all saying they wouldn't have missed it for the world. All this on top of TV and radio interviews as well as newspaper articles about her Women's Land Army days.