

REMEMBER



**ARMED FORCES DAY**

**GOLSPIE SUTHERLAND  
2009 & 2010**

lest we

FORGET

# THE RAISING OF THE FLAG IN GOLSPIE for ARMED FORCES WEEK

‘Armed Forces Day’, which is now a UK wide celebrated event held annually on the last Saturday of June, is the opportunity for everyone to join together to pay tribute to our Armed Forces, past, present and future. The focus is on celebrating both the past, and the continuing contributions made by our Armed forces and veterans. On the day itself, and in the period leading up to it, events take place across the UK, ranging from national and regional celebrations, to local events.



One of the official activities which occurs to observe the start of the week, is the raising of an unique Armed Forces Day flag within all the Boroughs, Districts and County Council areas in the United Kingdom.

Locally, the Flag Raising event takes place at Drummie, Golspie, to mark the start of the week in which Armed Forces Day falls. The Lieutenancy of Sutherland, in conjunction with the Highland Council make the arrangements for this event.

This booklet has been produced to provide a record of the events that took place in 2009 and 2010. The first was held on 22nd June 2009 and took a format of a gathering of veterans and presentation of the Veterans Badge to those who requested presentation. The second was held on 21st June 2010 and took a format of presentation of medals to former members of the Land Army. At the same time any veterans who were not presented with their Veterans Badge the previous year were welcomed to have their badges presented if they so wished.

The contents of this booklet have been split into two sections, the first 2009 showing photographs taken at the event with a description of the occasion. The second section 2010 shows some photographs of the day and also presentations made where the recipients were unable to attend. It also includes real life stories written/told by these Land Army (Girls). These were ladies who worked on the local farms during the Second World War, replacing those who had to leave the land to join the Services.

*We should Remember lest we Forget*

# *Armed Forces Day Parade*

at

## *Drummuie Golspie*

### **22nd June 2009**



The very first celebration of Armed Forces Day was held at Drummuie, the offices and grounds of the Highland Council based at Golspie. The impressive building looking over the A9 and across to the North Sea was the old site of the Sutherland Technical School, after several years of being closed now renovated and restored to its former self.

This gave a wonderful backdrop to the Parade and Flag Raising Ceremony. Although the weather was sunny and dry there was a fair wind blowing across the ground, not that this put the dampers on any of the proceedings. The day started with the Veterans and public gathering inside/outside the



building for teas, coffee and small bites.

After refreshments the Sutherland Schools Pipe Band under Pipe Major S Monaghan and Drum Major A Cameron marched onto the Parade area to entertain us with a wide selection of music before and during the ceremony.



This was followed by the Standard Bearers from the Royal Naval Association Golspie, and the Royal British Legion Branches from Rogart & Lairg, Dornoch, Creich & Kincardine.



Lt Col Colin Gilmour MBE DL then requested that the Veterans should take up their position on the Parade area. There were some 70 Veterans on parade to commemorate this the first Armed Forces Day Parade.

The parade was commanded by Sergeant Major David Mackenzie and was greatly enhanced by members of the Dornoch and Brora Detachments of 1st Battalion The Highlanders Cadet Force, taking their positions up either side of the colourful standards.





The raising of the Armed Forces Day Flag, carried out by William Munro from Lairg.

Commander William Sutherland  
Royal Navy

On completion of the flag raising and General Salute, Lt Col Colin Gilmour MBE DL gave a welcoming speech and then handed over to Jonathan Brett Young to announce the Veterans who wished to have their Veteran Badges presented. The presentation of the badges was carried out by the Deputy Lieutenant Flower Thomson.



The following pictures are of the presentations:

Roderick Broad Royal Artillery



Donald MacCulloch Royal Navy



Bob Inkster Royal Artillery



William Letters Queen's Own Highlanders



Micheal O'Reilly RAF & Royal Anglian



Duncan Matheson 1st Seaforth



James Ritchie REME



William Munro Lovat Scouts



Fergus Robertson Black Watch



Hugh Murray Lovat Scouts



T J Smith Royal Air Force



John Melville Royal Air Force



Jean Manson Princess Mary's  
RAF Nursing



Lt Col Colin Gilmour MBE DL  
Queen's Own Highlanders



Jonathan Brett Young and Ray Clarke  
'Just having a chat'

## Other Photographs taken on the day





## *Drummuie flag raising* *21st June 2010*

There was a jingling of medals in the magnificent setting at the front of Drummuie, Golspie, on Monday where a special flag-raising ceremony, sponsored by the Sutherland Lieutenancy in conjunction with Highland Council, was held to mark the start of the week in which the national Armed Forces Day falls.

The occasion was also used to present Veterans' badges and Land Girls' medals to some of those attending. Veterans stood proudly in their berets and medals, as the flag was raised by Bill Grant of Dornoch, an ex member of the Life Guards, who served from 1949 to 1951. He was ably assisted by Cadet Sergeant Billy Jappy of Helmsdale, parading on his first occasion as the Lord Lieutenant's cadet.

The parade was enhanced by members of the Brora and Dornoch Army Cadet Force detachments and the colourful Standards of the Royal British Legion branches of Dornoch, Lairg and Rogart, and Creich and Kincardine, with Dornoch also parading the union standard. George Stewart, Golspie, played his pipes during the ceremony.

The occasion was an opportunity for Flower Thomson, Deputy Lieutenant, to present four of the veterans with their Veteran's badge – Donald McNeil of Rogart, Gordon Raspin and Alaisdair Miller both of Golspie, and Bill Grant of Dornoch. Then it was the turn of the Land Girls to receive their medals. Susan Read of Bonar Bridge, Sheila Speak of Dornoch and Margaret Martin of Golspie had all served in the Women's Land Army, colloquially known as Land Girls. This uniformed organisation was formed to free male land workers to go to war.

These Sutherland ladies had all worked on farms during the Second World War, often from dawn to dusk helping towards the war effort. During the past few weeks Mrs Thomson had tracked down a total of nine Land Girls and had previously presented six of them with their medals – Isabella Gray, Dorothy Mackenzie, Tina Dickinson and Jane Heath all of Dornoch, Helen Innes of Golspie and Vera Macdonald of Ardgay.

It was pleasing to see two members of the same family being recognised on this occasion, as Margaret Martin's daughter is married to Gordon Raspin.

In his speech Colin Gilmour, Deputy Lieutenant, said that it was a grand day for all to remember, and the opportunity for everyone to join together to pay tribute to our Armed Forces, past and present.



Photograph of The Late Mrs Nancy Jones  
Land Army Girl in Full Dress Uniform  
Copy Donated by Mrs Margaret How (daughter)  
Romsey Hampshire

*Stephanie How  
Romsey*

*Jane Heath  
(Dornoch)*

Jane got off the train at Borough Green, Kent with a light heart, realizing her life was about to change. She imagined her employer would be on the platform to greet her, but a mob of people got off the train and disappeared. Eventually a man approached her and told her to hurry along. He was very busy. He drove her down the road and stopped at a group of modern houses. Jane looked at them in horror - where was the idyllic country cottage? Mrs T let them in and showed off her house and immaculate bedroom, which was to be Jane's.

Everything in its place, quite unlike what she was accustomed to. The boss was waiting and said he'd have to go, but would come for her at 2.30pm. Jane got ready for work settling for breeches, sweater and boots. Mrs T took one look at these and said boots were not for indoors (even pristine new ones). They were to be left in the shed.

At 2.30pm she was collected and taken to the farm buildings up on Wrotham Hill, where she was handed over to the bailiff, who took her to a field where there were two tractors. One was already being driven by the foreman and the one ancient one was to be hers. It took their combined efforts to get this going but eventually it was fixed up and Jane set off to collect a cultivator and start work. In due course they stopped and the foreman was friendly and offered her some of his tea. He asked her how she would get home - a long way to walk, especially up the hill. His brother had a bike he reckoned he could borrow for her. Jane enquired what time they would finish - he replied, when it got dark.

Eventually Jane got her motorbike from home, which was a great help (but the landlady was very funny about oil drips). It was nearly 8pm when she got to the digs. This was not what the landlady planned. She produced sandwiches and a glass of milk (which Jane couldn't stand). Jane soon got to know the other tractor drivers and enjoyed the work even though it was boring at times. She got to know the local garage mechanic who reckoned he knew of a cottage



*Flower Thomson presenting  
Jane with her Certificate and  
Land Army Medal*

locally, where she could look after herself. (And it was a proper cottage such as she imagine). The area was of course under the flight path of both UK and German planes. A bomber was brought down close by, but fortunately no one on the ground was hurt.

The farm they were working on was one of the smaller ones being managed by the Talbots and once the cultivators were finished they could return to the main farm for the winter work, ploughing, cultivating and preparing for drilling, all to be done by Christmas time. Then there was plenty of repairing buildings and over hauling machinery. Potato clamps were opened up and the potatoes sorted for size and sacking up for sale, etc. Spring came, with crops to sow, silage and hay to be cut and so the cycle started again, with the farm tractors kept busy. Time off was pretty scarce but in the winter Jane joined the Badminton Club, meeting in the Village Hall and became a competent player in the local team with matches played against neighbouring villages.

So the cycle continued until the W.L.A. Hierachy encouraged Jane to apply for a post at Swanley Horticultural College. After her interview Jane was selected for the post of supervisor of the Land Girls, getting experience with specialized horticultural equipment and cultivation. They were involved in reclaiming any non-productive areas such as golf course, playing fields, tennis courts and verges and growing suitable food, crops on these areas. The War Agricultural Executive Committee planned the cropping. One crop was growing vegetable marrows. Jane discovered that these were to be made into jam. It was a way to bulk up more expensive fruits. In Kent the growing season is more or less continuous so there were always crops being sown, hoed and harvested

The Land Girls came for six weeks training then went off to their jobs and a new batch arrived. The welfare of the girls in her charge was also one of Jane's responsibilities. A wide and varied set of problems had to be sorted. One advantage of the Swanley job was that Jane could live at home, travelling each day on her motorbike. One day, one of the W.L.A. Organizers came to her to encourage her to apply for a job advertised in the Daily Telegraph. The job was as a welfare officer in Aylesbury, Bucks. By this time she had an Austin Seven and off she went confidently.

By this time the Land Army was being wound down as men were returning from active service. Jane thought she would enjoy the challenge of a new career. When the interviewers asked her why she felt she had any qualifications for such a job, she replied that she felt she had the natural aptitude for it. Her confidence must have been impressive as she got the job. It certainly led to her continuing career in welfare work.

*Vera MacDonald*  
(Ardgay)

The Land Army was not my first choice but the Army doctors thought I was not strong enough for the A.T.S.

When I joined I was fortunate in being sent to Buckinghamshire where most of the Land Girls were billeted in large houses donated by their owners for the duration. The friend I joined with and myself were sent to Little Hampden House,



*Flower Thomson presenting Vera with her Land Army Medal*

a very pleasant house which was about thirty years old. We were six or eight to a room and slept in bunk beds. Our Warden was a very pleasant person and we had two other ladies who did the cooking and house work. Of course we were expected to keep our rooms clean and tidy and we took turns in washing up after meals. The house had been designed for a family and the nursery bathroom had an enormous bath, so we had a bath partner.

The first two winters I worked with five other girls for a man who owned a threshing machine and we travelled round to different farms. The machine was driven by a steam engine. In the summer we also went round different farms doing field work and haymaking.

After two years I decided I wanted a change and got a job with two other girls on a local farm. One of the girls and I still lived in the Hostel, we all had main jobs as well as doing the other farm work, Mine was looking after the pigs which were being reared for the local bacon factory and also supervising when we had gangs of P.O.Ws. On the farm. These were about sixteen men at a time and sometimes were German, sometimes Italian. They were needed when there was a big job to do such as lifting potatoes or cutting a field of cabbages for the market. We used to also have gangs of girls from the local Borstal but on and off the other girls supervised them.

I was country born although I lived a lot of my life in town areas but I like the farm work.



*Photograph shows: Vera MacDonald's Discharge certificates, her W.L.A. Arm Band, photo of the girls she worked alongside and the Land Army Medal presented to her.*



*Copy of Front and inside of an unused W.L.A. Christmas Card*

WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR  
BRIGHT WITH HOPE AND  
PROSPERITY.

*O may lightsome be yer gangin'  
An' yer every need be met;  
Through sun an' snaw, at each day's fi  
May there aye be a hamely yett.*

*B.P.G.*

*Isabella Gray  
(Dornoch)*

My mother, Isabella Gray, (always known as Isabel) was born in Edinburgh on 19th June 1927. She left school at the age of fourteen and went to work in Wilkies on Princess Street in Edinburgh where she was trained to be a dress seller. My mother often laughs when she remembers those



*Flower Thomson Presenting Isabel  
with her Land Army Medal  
and Certificate*

days because apparently, though the ‘youngsters’ were let loose on the customers, if the senior assistants suspected that a sale was about to be made they would step in quickly and complete the sale because they would get the commission!

One of my mother’s other duties - even at that very young age - was to do fire duty at night. She and Miss Wilkie, one of the members of the family who owned the shop at that time, had to go up on the roof of the shop, armed only with a stirrup pump and as my mother says, if the shop actually had been hit by a bomb not only would she and Miss Wilkie been blown to bits, the stirrup pump would not have been much use. Did my mother get the day off after being on the roof all night, guarding the shop? Of course not. She still had to put in a full day’s work on the shop floor and her wages for the week- Monday to Saturday - were five shillings, or twenty-five pence in today’s money.

In 1943, my mother decided she wanted to do more for the war effort. Her dream was to join the Wrens, but her father was a chief petty officer in the Navy and he said ‘No daughter of mine is going to go in the Navy!’ So that put an end to that. My mother’s cousin decided she was going to join the Land Army and she showed my mother all these posters of girls leaning on haystacks, under blue sunny skies and my mother thought, that looks fun. Both my grandmother and great grandmother, attempted to dissuade my mother from joining up, saying she wouldn’t like the country after being a city girl all her life, but having been thwarted in her desire to join the Wrens, my mother was not going to be stopped this time, and, as she pointed out, she wouldn’t be alone, she would be with her cousin.

She and her cousin promptly signed up and were sent to East Lothian to do their training, almost immediately my mother's cousin was sent off to one farm while my mother was sent to one in Aberdeenshire so she was alone after all.

I think farming life was a real shock for my city girl mother. She found the accent of the people in Aberdeenshire very hard to understand and the few male workers on the farm thought it great fun to put mice in the Land Girls' boots and sandwich boxes. Getting up when it was dark - going to bed when it was dark, was difficult, too and my mother suffered from the most appalling chilblains in the Winter. Chilblains which went from the back of her ankles right up to the back of her knees, which meant she was in great pain a lot of the time. Eventually the farm owner took pity on her and allowed my mother to work in the greenhouses during the Winter months, but in the Summer it was all hands on deck and my mother's most abiding memory is of standing on top of the hay wagon, forking hay into the thresher and praying she wouldn't fall in there too.

My mother did make a very good friend on the farm, a girl called Jenny Taylor. Jenny told my mother that her cousin Jim, was in Malaya in the Air Force, but he didn't have many people writing to him, so she wondered if my mother would like to write to be his pen pal. My mother duly wrote a letter and got a real stinker of a letter back from Jim saying he didn't need any complete strangers writing to him, thank you very much and he certainly didn't need anyone feeling sorry for him. My mother wrote back to him - an equally snippy letter - saying fine, if that was the way he felt, then she wouldn't write any more. Jim wrote back to say he was very sorry and he shouldn't have been so rude. Who was Jim? Jim was my father. He and my mother wrote to each other for the rest of the war, my father telling my mother all about life in India and Malaya and my mother told him about her life on the farm. Of course, my father could never tell my mother what he was actually doing because of security, so his letters were full of descriptions of the people and customs he encountered. My grandmother and great grandmother used to read these letters as they said. 'It was like a proper travelogue!' When the war ended, my father met my mother for the very first time and he always said that the minute he saw her on Waverley Station he knew she was the girl for him. They were married for sixty-one very happy years, it's strange to think that if my mother had been allowed to join the Wrens she would never have met my father and my sister and I would never have been born.



*Susan Read  
(Bonar Bridge)*

My first job was on a small mixed market garden/fruit farm in Kent with much RAF/Luftwaffe activity overhead. After a year I moved to a small dairy farm with pigs, poultry, orchard, soft fruit and a large walled vegetable garden. We took the fruit and veg into Newbury market. Also supplied Marks & Spencers. People were so thankful to buy vegetables then and we grew quite a variety.

When I first went to this farm, the cows were looked after by an elderly farm worker and three girls did the rest. The man died and could

not be replaced. One girl left and another got pregnant. As her husband was fighting in the Western Desert, she was quietly ousted. It was a shocking thing to happen in those days. So I was on my own with 8 Guernsey cows and young stock, three sows (Mrs Blimp was my favourite) plus piglets in due season, a poultry flock and all the vegetable area to manage plus fruit to pick. Field cultivation and haymaking was done by neighbouring farmers.

It was hard work and, seasonally, very long hours. The owners helped when available and became a second family to me. The daughter was in the Timber Corps, requisitioning timber for pit props, etc. One day after a gale, she found a fledging Tawny Owl on the forest floor. *Wollie* came home to be reared by me. Neighbours helped by catching mice for him and I got quite good at potting rats with an air gun. Eventually he returned to the wild, but used to come back to me for food and even brought a companion with him.

My employer was in the local Home Guard so I used to be included in local exercises. What strange things we did!

In 1945, the men were gradually being released from the Services. The original gardener was demobbed and a cowman was available. I was able



*Susan and Wollie (the hand reared Tawny Owl)*

to apply for an Ex-Servicemen's grant to go to University in October 1946, so I moved to a large farm in Dorset. Five girls and a man looked after the herd of 100 Ayrshire cows (the calves and followers were reared on a separate farm).

Milking took place in a modern (in those days) milking parlour. The milk was pasteurised on site, then cooled and bottled to go to the schools in Sherbourne, Dorset. We got up at 4.00am to milk at 4.30, because the 100 gallons pasteuriser had to be heated by steam from a (temperamental) boiler. The bottles had to be in the van by 7.00am. A second batch went off at 8.30 by which time we would have finished milking and put the cows out. Breakfast was welcome then.

Out again at 9.00 to return to the parlour, clean the calving boxes, yards and cowsheds by 11.30 or so. Lunch of soup, bread and cheese, then a chance to have a sleep. Then out again at 2.30 to fetch the cows to do the milking all over again.

In Summer we were asked if we would like to help out haymaking. We usually did and were out in the fields till dark. I must admit my time on this farm passed in a blur of exhaustion, but it was fun working in a team for a change.

In September 1946 I was discharged from the W.L.A. and went to Reading University to do a degree in Agriculture and, in due course, a job with the Ministry of Agriculture, with plenty of practical experience to draw on.

*Susan being  
Presented with her  
Land Army Medal  
by  
Flower Thomson*



*Margaret Martin  
(Golspie)*

Until recently I didn't realise how much the W.L.A. contributed to the war effort. I always thought the reason I joined the Land Army was self indulgence. I was born and reared in the industrial town of Middlesbrough. I left school at the age of fourteen and got a job of national importance making soldiers battledress blouses. This was factory work with dozens of industrial machines; they were both noisy and dangerous, many of the workers were injured including myself. I remember having the forefinger of my right hand trapped between the needle and the machine. Once I managed to attract the attention of one of my workmates I was rushed to the clinic and given first aid. I enjoyed this job for a while, however I became allergic to the material so I had to leave this job and move onto another job of national importance, as all jobs were at that time.



*Margaret being Presented with  
her Land Army Medal by  
by Flower Thomson*

Like lots of towns and cities Middlesbrough was heavily bombed, thankfully our home only suffered the blast, which meant we often had ceilings down and windows blasted out and the inside of the house covered in soot. It was on one of these occasions I was helping my mother to clean up the mess, when my friend from the other end of town arrived on her bike to see if we had survived the bombing and asked if I would be able to go on a bike ride with her. My mother said off you go and enjoy yourselves you have helped me all morning, so off we went out into the country. You can't imagine the sense of peace and quiet we felt.

The war had its lighter moments, like the time there was a night raid, my mother, two brothers and sister had gone to the air raid shelter leaving dad and I to lock up the house. When we heard the machine guns of the plane above us, at that very moment my dad gave out a yelp and grabbed the backside of his trousers, I cried "dad, dad, have you been shot?" to which he replied, "no it's a b....y mouse that's run up my trouser leg." He released his hold on the mouse and it dropped to the ground. We then made our way safely to the air raid shelter. The memory of the mouse incident kept coming back to me and I kept having fits of giggles only to find my dad giving me a perishing look which meant behave yourself.

After that day in the country I had a strong urge to join the Land Army. In those days if you wanted anything your mother always said “see what your dad says”, so poor dad, I nagged him relentlessly for permission to join, the answer was always NO. Then one day he put on this broad Yorkshire accent and said to me “what if the farmer says get int’ meadow and stick fork int’ muck”; I said that’s what I will do then.

Not long after this, wanting to join the Land Army had to be put on hold as fate took over in the form of diphtheria. I had a long spell in an isolation hospital, then the day came when I was well enough to go home. The doctor had a word with dad, he told him I wouldn’t be able to ride a bike etc., the whole family looked after me so well that I was soon riding my bike, then the nagging started again and dad said yes I could join the Land Army.

My uniform arrived, then I was on my way to Fyling Old Hall in Fylingdale Robin Hood’s Bay. The questions I asked the farmer when he showed me round the cow byre was which were the bulls, he said he didn’t keep bulls on his farm. I doubted him, then when I realised he really didn’t, I thought dad was right when he told me I didn’t know anything about farming. I thought really I am a towny, however I was a fast learner. Dad was right again as my first job was sticking fork int’ Muck out int’ meadow and I loved it. This was in November on the North Yorkshire moors. I enjoyed my time here even though every time I sat at the table to write a letter home the farmer would put his bare feet on the table and ask me to file his corns. I said I had never filed corns in my life, he passed me this file with a rough side and a smooth side, I thought I would file his corns then maybe I would get peace to write my letter. Until one day he asked, so I took hold of his toe, turned the file to the rough side and gave his corns a real good filing, so much so that he was shouting that’s enough. Peace at last he never asked me again, I wonder why!

After my time in Fylingdale I was transferred to Thirsk Land Army Hostel where there were lots of girls from all over Britain. We used to hold dances in the large dining room with lots of good food laid on. It was at one of these dances that I met my husband, a local lad that had just been demobbed from the Highland Light Infantry after six years service. The doors to the dance had been locked but one of the lads looked out of the window said “George is home,” opened the window and let him in.

Naughty but nice and my family and myself are forever grateful to him for opening that window.

I worked on a dairy farm about five miles from Thirsk, so I had to cycle 10 miles a day, six days a week, I only worked half a day on Saturday. One day I was doing my washing in the laundry which consisted of a large table, scrubbing brushes, soap, sinks, a wringing machine or mangle and a boiler house to dry our clothes. The door opened and there stood a five foot tall girl in a Land Army uniform that would have been too big for a six footer, not only that it was a scorching hot day and her make-up had turned bright orange, this was a girl I used to work with in Middlesbrough. She joined the Land Army and asked to be posted with me and asked if she could also work with me and that's what happened.

Once I recovered from a fit of the giggles, I lent her some of my uniform until she got her own exchanged. The first time she had to go into the cow byre, the sweat poured from her, then she made the sign of the cross. I said just talk to the cows they are very quiet, she soon got over her fears and was very good at her job. Sometimes we had to get the vet to the animals. Our local vet was James Heriot, we knew him as Alf White. I once wrote to him of some of my farming memories and I received a very nice reply.

The winter of 1947 was very hard with snow-drifts like huge icebergs. The prisoners of war were asked to clear the roads but they refused, so the Land Girls had to do it myself included. The newspapers soon got hold of the story and it was front page news. George and I married in June 1947 and settled down to a happy family life.



*Flower Thomson with Margaret and family*

(It was so nice to see two members of same family being recognised  
Margaret and her daughter's husband Gordon Raspin)

## *Sheila Speak Dornoch*

Sheila Broadbent, as she then was would never have joined the Women's Land Army had it not been for her poor eyesight.

Back in 1941, when she was 18, and with Britain at war, she wanted to sign up with the Women's Royal Air Force, but was summarily rejected following an eye test. She recalls, "I had to pass a medical for the WRAF and they just whipped my specs off my face and told me to read down the board. Well, I couldn't even see where the board was! They said 'I'm sorry' so I thought, I'll join the Land Army. Your eyesight didn't matter there."

So began, almost by accident rather than design, three golden years for Sheila - years which are still etched in minute detail in her memory despite the passage of well over half a century. Now an 85-year old widow living in, Dornoch, she is known by her married name as Sheila Speak. She says: "It was a long time ago, but I remember every bit of it. You don't forget."

She has had even more cause to reminisce recently because of the arrival by post at her bungalow of the Women's Land Army Badge and certificate. The award of the commemorative badge follows decades of campaigning by former land girls to get formal recognition of their contribution to the war effort. The WLA had 80,000 members at its peak in 1943.

Sheila originally hails from Greenfield near Oldfield - not far, she points out, from Saddleworth Moor, scene of the notorious moors murders. Her mother was a nurse and the first person to leave the area to serve in France during the First World War. Her dad worked in a woollen mill.

Sheila was one of 34 girls from Lancashire sent by the Land Army to help the war effort in Wrexham, North Wales. They were instructed to bring with them their national health and unemployment insurance cards, medical cards, gas masks, ration books and clothing coupons.

Sheila left her gas mask on the train and went through the war without it. Thankfully she never had to experience a gas attack. The girls were fortunate to be billeted not at a Land Army hostel but at a Royal Ordnance Factory hostel at Rhosnessney, near Wrexham.

There they occupied one block, with the other blocks home to chemists and boffins working at a nearby underground munitions factory. Sheila was later to plough the ground on top of the factory. She recalls sitting down to dinner with the factory workers who handled nitroglycerine. They used to come into the canteen and they were yellow. Their faces were yellow.

We would sit there all bronzed and healthy from having been out in the fresh air and sunshine. The accommodation was rudimentary but the girls each had their own small rooms fitted out with a pretty hard bed, wardrobe and small dressing table. However, the hostel did have other attractions.

We were very, very lucky in where we were billeted and had lots of advantages; we wouldn't have got in an ordinary Land Army hostel, says Sheila. The hostel was lovely. It was like a holiday camp and had a dance hall and a concert hall. It really was a great place to be. Wrexham Garrison was just down the road and the Royal Fusiliers were billeted there! The only downside was that, at the Land Army hostel you got double rations, but we didn't.

A week after arriving at the hostel. Sheila was given a rudimentary driving test and told she was to be an official Land Army driver. She recalls: "This chap came to see us and saw that I had taken my bike with me. He must have thought, 'she knows her way about the roads', and so he put me in a van and said that I would do." From then on she drove the rest of the girls to the various farms where they worked and later picked them up again. She would also be called on to transport machinery and other equipment to outlying farms.



She says: "I drove various vehicles and eventually also heavy goods vehicles. I could take a car to pieces in those days. The vehicles were ex-army and somewhat temperamental. I would often get a flat tyre in the middle of nowhere".

"A lot of the farms did not have much in the way of machinery those days, so I would have to deliver anything that was needed. One time I drove miles into the hills with sheep dip. There were six shepherds who lived away up there and could only speak Welsh. They looked after around 1000 sheep. If anyone deserved a medal then it was their three sheep dogs who took those sheep off the mountains".

The girls worked a 48 hour week and were paid 38 shillings, out of which was deducted £1 for their board and lodgings. Overtime was payable at the rate of ninepence ha'penny an hour. When not driving, Sheila worked at various agricultural jobs. She spent her first month in the Land Army picking strawberries and says: "I was freezing and never wanted to see a strawberry again. You couldn't see the end of the field, it

was so big." For 18 months she accompanied a young farmer who travelled round various farms with a threshing machine. On her first day in this post, she was the target of a fellow worker's devilish sense of humour.

"I used to work on the box of the machine, feeding corn through the thresher. On my first day I was standing on the box when this big hulk of a fellow jumped up and put a clutch of dead mice down my front. How I screamed!" The farmer came up and knocked him straight off the box. A fortnight later I was flinging rats about myself!

Sheila worked with United States soldiers and also Italian prisoners of war. She recalls that the "yanks" always tried to drive her off the road while the Italian POWs headed back for their billets as soon as it started raining leaving the Land Army Girls to work on.

Sheila joined the Land Army in 1941 and left in 1944 after she got married and became pregnant. Her husband died when their daughter was only seven months old and she remarried. They went on to have a son, Steve. The family lived initially in Sheila's home town of Greenfield but later spent 11 years in Middlesex and 17 years in Whitley Bay, Northumberland. Sheila and Lawrie used to holiday in Scotland and moved to Dornoch to live in 1982. In a lifetime spanning 85 years, three years is not a long time, but Sheila has never forgotten anything about her time in the Land Army.



She says: "We worked hard and it wasn't always sunny weather, but I had a wonderful, wonderful time. I loved every minute. It was a happy time. The camaraderie was brilliant. Everybody was brilliant in those days and I made a lot of friends

There are very few of us left. My best friend died not that long ago. She married a farmer and never left Wrexham."



Sheila Speak, with her Women's Land Army Badge and certificate.

Sheila acknowledges that recognition for the efforts made by the Land Army has been a long time in coming. The certificate she received with the badge states: "The Government wishes to express to you its profound gratitude for your unsparing efforts as a loyal and devoted member of the Women's Land Army / Women's Timber Corps at a time when our country depended upon you for its survival." She says: "It's quite nice to get it. It is a bit late, but I never thought anything about being recognised at the time".

Everybody was just doing their bit. There was a group of young lads near us who worked down the coal mines, the Bevin Boys they were called. They sang as they went to work every day. They were wonderful. They didn't get much recognition.

*Sheila being Presented  
with her  
Land Army Medal  
by  
Flower Thomson*



## *Helen Innes Golspie*

Helen Wilson, at the age of 20, joined the Land Army on the 24th June 1944. Her placement was with Cantray Farm on the outskirts of the village of Croy near Inverness with a weekly, statutory wage of 22 shillings. The farm was owned by Mr Charles Munro.

The placement commenced with an initial four weeks training course. During her time at Cantray, Helen worked on the poultry side of the farm.

This involved the rearing of chicks, the grading of eggs and the distribution of their products around a significant area of Inverness and beyond.

It was as a Land Army Girl that she met her future husband Tom Innes, who also worked on the same farm. Helen and Tom were married in May 1946 and her service concluded with the Land Army on 7th July 1948. Tom continued to work with Mr Munro at Cantray for a total of forty six years -.



*Helen being presented with her  
Land Army Medal and Certificate  
by Flower Thomson helped by  
Jonathan Brett Young*



Photographs of Helen  
feeding the Hens and sorting  
the eggs



*The following documents belong to Helen and her permission was given to include them into this booklet. Helen's maiden name was Wilson.*



*By this personal message I wish to express to you*

HELEN WILSON

*my appreciation of your loyal and devoted service  
as a member of the Women's Land Army from  
24th June, 1944 to 7th July, 1948.  
Your unsparing efforts at a time when the victory  
of our cause depended on the utmost use of the  
resources of our land have earned for you the  
country's gratitude.*

Personal message from  
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Copy of Helen's Notification of Training Confirmation from  
Department of Agriculture for Scotland

Correspondents are asked to  
address replies, postage on  
which must be prepaid, to  
THE SECRETARY  
and to quote W.L.A. 25260.

Training confirmation  
For trainees.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR SCOTLAND,  
(Labour Division),  
15 Grosvenor Street,  
EDINBURGH, 12.

Telegrams: "B.O.A.S. Edinburgh"  
Telephone: Edinburgh 34661

27th June, 1944.

Enclosures - W.L.A. 33 & 53 and  
Copy Order

Madam,

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY.

I have to confirm the arrangements made for you to undergo, as from  
8th July, a four weeks' course of training on the farm of Gallowfield,  
Gallowfield, occupied by Mr. John Burns,  
with a view to subsequent employment thereon.

- (1) During training board and lodging will be provided free.
- (2) Personal allowances will be paid to trainees whose work and conduct are satisfactory, at the rate of 22/- a week for trainees, aged 18 or above, (18/6 if below 18), less National Health and Pensions and Unemployment Insurance contributions.
- (3) Immediately you begin training, you must forward your National Health and Pensions and Unemployment Insurance cards to this Office for stamping as no training allowance beyond that for the first week will be paid until the cards have been received. The cards will be returned to you on completion of your training and should then be handed to your employer.
- (4) If you abandon the course of training without good cause, or are dismissed by the farmer for unsatisfactory work or conduct, your claim to payment of the personal allowance may be forfeited and you may be liable to refund to the Department the sum expended on your training.
- (5) The farmer has been informed that during training the hours of work must not exceed 50 a week, unless you voluntarily agree to work longer, e.g. with the object of gaining more experience. The precise times of working will be a matter for arrangement between the farmer and yourself.
- (6) If your travelling expenses to the farm have not already been advanced to you, they will be refunded by the Department on receipt of the enclosed claim form (W.L.A. 33) duly completed.
- (7) Clothing for your use has been sent to the farm. If needed for dairy work, an additional coat-overall will be issued to you on request in place of one of the pairs of dungarees, which should be returned to the Department. As soon as possible after the end of your training period additional uniform equipment will be sent to you, on receipt of a certificate from the farmer to the effect that you have made satisfactory progress, and that he proposes to retain your services as a member of his permanent staff so long as you continue to be satisfactory. A form of certificate (W.L.A. 34A) has been sent to the farmer for completion at the end of the training period. It is recommended that you should timeously remind him that the form should be returned to the Department in order that the balance of your equipment may be issued. It should be understood that the equipment remains at all times the property of the Department and must be returned to them when requested or when your employment as a member of the Women's Land Army ceases. Proper care must be exercised in the use of the equipment.
- (8) Your training has been arranged on the understanding that compensation will be payable to you by the Department in respect of any accident arising out of and during the course of your training.

(9) The memorandum (W.L.A. 53) enclosed shows the basis on which your wages should be calculated on being taken into employment by the farmer after training and also contains information regarding National Health and Pensions and Unemployment Insurance contributions.

(10) Before going to the farm you should, in your own interest, obtain from the Food Office in your home district an emergency ration card for at least a week. This will give you time to carry through the re-registration procedure in your new district without causing catering difficulties to yourself or to those boarding you.

(11) You are expected to conform to the rules of the household where you are billeted.

(12) In case of any difficulties or complaints regarding wages, accommodation etc., you should, while still on the farm, communicate with the local representative of the Women's Land Army Sub-Committee for *Gloucestershire*, whose name and address will be given to you by the Secretary of that Sub-Committee, Miss *D. Smith, 23 Academy St.* Do not defer this until a later date when it may be difficult or impossible to reach a satisfactory settlement. The Women's Land Army representative mentioned will arrange to look after your interests and she should be immediately informed if you give or are given notice of termination of training or employment. You should not leave your training or employment without first consulting the Women's Land Army representative for the district. This is in your own interests as you may, depending on the circumstances qualify for a special allowance.

(13) Should you terminate your employment without giving proper notice or without due cause you will be liable to dismissal from the Land Army.

I am, Madam,  
Your obedient Servant,

D. EDWARDS.

*Miss Helen Wilson*

#### SPECIAL NOTE

REMEMBER THAT YOUR SERVICE IN THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY IS YOUR CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WINNING THE WAR. IF YOU LEAVE THE FARM WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE W.L.A. REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE DISTRICT WHERE YOU ARE EMPLOYED, THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE WILL NOT PLACE YOU IN OTHER EMPLOYMENT OR ALLOW YOU TO JOIN ONE OF THE OTHER WOMEN'S SERVICES UNTIL THE LOCAL W.L.A. REPRESENTATIVE HAS BEEN CONSULTED AND YOU MAY ULTIMATELY BE DIRECTED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE TO ANY WORK OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE, INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL WORK, NOT OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING INTERESTS, THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD FIRST OF ALL GET INTO TOUCH WITH YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE. SHE WILL BE READY AND WILLING TO HELP YOU.

# Copy of Memorandum regarding Rates of Pay and National Health, Pension and Unemployment Insurance

## WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

### Memorandum regarding Rates of Pay and National Health, Pensions and Unemployment Insurance.

#### (1) Rates of Pay

Members of the W.L.A. shall, on taking up employment, be entitled to receive weekly wages at not less than the appropriate minimum rate prescribed in the Order (copy enclosed) of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board in force in the district. If board and lodging are provided by the employers a deduction may be made from the wage of the value of board and lodging as fixed in the Orders. In the event of members being boarded but in approved billets provided by their employers, the ~~gross weekly wages paid to the members must be sufficient to leave them, after they~~ have paid for such board and lodging, with at least the net cash wage to which they would have been entitled, in terms of the relative Wages Order, if board and lodging had been provided direct by the employers. The hours of work fixed in the Order for the district will also apply, unless it is agreed by employer and worker that shorter hours should be worked, in which event no reduction in the wage indicated above may be made. In addition to the above weekly wages, overtime payment at not less than the rate prescribed in the Order will be payable for overtime employment as defined in the Order.

It is desirable that a written contract, which would be legally enforceable, should in every case be entered into by the employer and the Land Army worker. Such contracts are necessary to safeguard the interest of both worker and employer.

Land Army members are provided on condition that full wages will be paid during periods of sickness, less any sickness benefit due in terms of the National Health Insurance Acts, until such time as notice of termination of engagement has been given and the period of notice has expired.

#### (2) National Health, Pensions and Unemployment Insurance

All members of the Land Army in training or employed on farms are regarded as insurable under the National Health & Pensions and Unemployment Insurance Schemes. Any member who has not already got her insurance cards may obtain the National Health and Contributory Pensions Insurance card from a Post Office and the Unemployment Insurance card from an Employment Exchange. A note of the rates of contribution in force is given below for your information:-

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>Employee</u>
<u>National Health and Pensions</u>			
16 and upwards	1/7d.	9d.	10d.
<u>Unemployment</u>			
<u>Age Group</u>			
16 - 17	3d.	1½d.	1½d.
18 - 20	5d.	2½d.	2½d.
21 and upwards	6d.	5d.	3d.

For the three schemes (Health, Pensions and Unemployment), therefore, the combined contributions are as follows:-

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>Employee</u>
<u>Age Group</u>			
16 - 17	1/10d.	10½d.	11½d.
18 - 20	2/-	11½d.	1/½d.
21 and upwards	2/1d.	1/-	1/1d.
<u>Medical/</u>			

Medical Benefit. Members of the Women's Land Army are entitled to free medical attention immediately on becoming insured. It is important that a member who undertakes training or enters into employment should take immediate steps to obtain a medical card, if she has not already got one, and to choose a doctor: she should not wait until she is ill before doing this. The medical card is, of course, quite separate from the National Health Insurance contribution card.

A member of the Land Army if a member of an approved Society, should already have received a medical card from the local Insurance Committee; but if not, or if she has lost her card, she should obtain the appropriate form of application from the nearest Post Office, fill it in, and send it to the Insurance Committee for the area in which she is being trained or employed.

~~If a member fails to obtain a medical card she should apply to an insurance doctor for treatment and explain to the doctor that she is insured. If the doctor charges a fee by way of deposit or if on his instructions medicine is purchased from a chemist, receipts should be obtained and forwarded at once to the local Insurance Committee for their consideration of the question of refunding the money.~~

Where a member changes her address and cannot get treatment from the doctor originally chosen by her, she should choose a new doctor, complete the appropriate part of her medical card (Part B or Part D as the case may be) and hand the card to her new doctor.

A list of insurance doctors and the address of the local Insurance Committee can be obtained from the local Post Office.

Hospital Treatment. If a member requires hospital treatment or needs nursing which she cannot obtain on the farm or in her lodgings, she should apply to her Women's Land Army representative, who may be able to arrange for her admission to a local hospital participating in the Emergency Hospital Scheme. She will be expected to contribute towards the cost of her treatment as far as possible, in accordance with the ordinary practice of the hospital concerned.

Nursing Service. If the illness does not necessitate Hospital Treatment but the skilled services of a district nurse are considered necessary the Women's Land Army member should at once communicate with her local Women's Land Army representative. She, in turn, will notify the County or District Nursing Association who will arrange for a district nurse to give attention. No charge will be made for the services but it is hoped that patients will contribute towards the expenses of the Nursing Association.

*Elizabeth V Dickenson  
(Dornoch)*

I joined the Womens Land Army (WLA) in March 1945 and was in the North Riding most of the time. I started off on the aerodrome at Linton-on-Ouse, near York.

Six of us shared a house on the aerodrome and we grew all the vegetables for the Canadians who were all lovely!!

I then went to various hostels, i.e. Terrington, Guisborough, Stokesley, Stockton-on-Forest and Leeming Bar, (where I was taught to drive). Then to Thirsk and became a Forewoman and lastly to Easingwold, where I met my husband.

We were married in 1949 and are still together. Several of my friends from the WLA have been sadly widowed but one has recently celebrated her Diamond wedding as well. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the WLA even in the Winter where we cycled everywhere and worked alongside Italian and German P.O.W.'S, who were coached everywhere (for obvious reasons, of course). I served 4 years but have no regrets.



*Elizabeth being presented with her Land Army Medal and certificate by Flower Thomson*



*Memories that lie within this selection of photographs*



***Dorothy Mackenzie  
(Dornoch)***

*Dorothy's son  
Russell Mackenzie  
helping his mother  
during the presentation  
by Flower Thompson*



Dorothy Mackenzie was born on June 24th 1914 in Drymen, Stirlingshire. She worked as a buyer in the “Rag Trade” in Glasgow.

Dorothy came to Dornoch as a Land Girl after training at the Row Institute in Aberdeen. She thoroughly enjoyed the country life and fell in love with Massey Ferguson tractors and her future husband Allan.

Once married she settled in Dornoch and remained there until her recent death on the eve of her 96th birthday.



Group photograph taken before the presentations

## Our Local Land Girls



Vera MacDonald



Helen Innes



Isabel Gray



Elizabeth Dickenson



Jane Heath & Dorothy MacKenzie



Sheila Speak - Susan Read - Margaret Martin



The Veterans on Parade 2009

## Photographs of the Armed Forces Flag Raising and Presentation of Veterans' Badges at Drummie Golspie 21st June 2010



Bill Grant with Cadet Sergeant Billy Jappy of Helmsdale the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet



Bill Grant with Cadet Sergeant Billy Jappy of Helmsdale



Bill Grant raises the 2010 Armed Forces Day flag



The British Legion Standards are dipped as the flag is raised



Lt Col Colin Gilmour makes a speech



The Four Standards on Parade

*Presentation of the Veteran's Badge on 21st June 2010  
by Deputy Lieutenant Flower Thomson*



Donald McNeil of Rogart



Bill Grant of Dornoch



Alasdair Miller of Golspie



Gordon Raspin of Golspie



Group Photo of some of the Veterans



*H M Armed Forces Veterans' Badge  
In Presentation Box*



*Woman's Land Army Badge  
In Presentation Box*

## Acknowledgements

Dr Monica Main, Lord Lieutenant of Sutherland, acknowledges with thanks all those who have contributed to this booklet, which is a historical record of the special Flag Raising parades at Drummuie in June 2009 and 2010 to mark the start of the week in which Armed Forces day falls. Both events, which form part of Sutherland's history, were sponsored by the Sutherland Lieutenancy in conjunction with Highland Council.

The booklet was first suggested by Mrs Flower Thomson DL of Golspie; she deserves credit for giving it the necessary impetus and encouragement. Some other people merit a very special word of thanks, particularly John Ford of Rogart, an army veteran himself, who in effect meticulously planned, designed and composed the whole booklet with such enthusiasm. Liz Barron, Administrative Officer, Voluntary Groups - East Sutherland for her advice and assistance. Fergus Robertson, Ospisdale, who took all the photographs and was very generous with his time and support. All eight Land Girls, whose names appear alongside their stories recounting their experiences, are thanked for their fascinating articles. Then there are all those to thank who made up the parades, the veterans themselves, the local British Legion branches and Royal Naval Association Golspie, the Army Cadets, and the Sutherland Schools' Pipe Band.

Finally, particular grateful thanks are due to Kilbraur Wind Farm Trust and East Sutherland Rotary Club for their generous donation towards the printing of the booklet. Its wide distribution will mean all the historical record centres within Sutherland will have a copy for people to enjoy, in addition to many individuals connected with the events.



## *Two Symbols of Remembrance*

### **The Poppy:-**



It was in 1918 when an American woman Moira Michael Wrote a poem in response to ‘In Flanders Field’ ‘We shall keep the faith’. In her poem she promised To wear a poppy to honour the dead; this was where the tradition to wear a poppy on Remembrance Day was first begun, a tradition that is still in existence today.

### **Rosemary:-**



The Ancient Greeks believed that Rosemary was a plant that made memories stronger, so Rosemary is worn on Remembrance Day as a symbol to make our memories of our fallen soldiers stronger.



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn  
At the going down of the Sun and in the Morning  
We Will Remember Them.*



Produced on behalf of  
The Lieutenancy of Sutherland  
by

