Advance Notice!

BLHA AGM &
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2016

Saturday, 18 June 2016

Hosted by Sharnbrook Local History Group

The Conference theme will be:

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR STORIES:
RESEARCHING OUR LOCAL HERITAGE

Keynote Speaker:

PROFESSOR CARENZA LEWIS
Professor of the Public Understanding of Research at Lincoln University
and one of the original *Time Team* presenters

Full details of the programme and booking arrangements will be in the
Spring issue of HIB
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   STUART ANTROBUS
From the Editor

In a very welcome and quick response to my plea in HIB 7.4 for more contributions, Stuart Antrobus sent the light-hearted article which appears below (page 6).

Stuart reflects on some of the incidental joys of looking through dusty record cards from the 1940s. Thanks to his extensive and long-term research on the Women’s Land Army of the 1940s, Bedfordshire has the most detailed record of any county regarding this distinctive women's civilian labour force which helped Britain produce its own food during and soon after the Second World War, while men previously employed in agriculture were away fighting. Over 203,000 young women were members nationally, for varying periods of service in the WLA between 1939 and 1950, with around 150,000 giving service during the actual war years of 1939–1945. At its peak period in 1944, around 1,000 were employed in Bedfordshire at any one time, with a total of over 3,000 serving at some time in Bedfordshire over the 10 years of the WLA’s existence as an organisation.

Using both local and national documentary research and his own oral history research with over 300 individual former land girls, starting in 2002, Stuart was able to publish his definitive book: We wouldn't have missed it for the world: the Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire, 1939–1950 (Book Castle Publishing, 2008). He then set about the time-consuming task of creating online individual service record pages for each of 3,306 Bedfordshire land girls, using limited official records together with documents and photographs provided by former land girls. Appropriately, November 2015 marked both the 65th anniversary of the disbandment of the Women’s Land Army on 30 November 1950 and the final end of Stuart’s long award-winning input to Bedfordshire’s Virtual Library local history pages on the Bedfordshire WLA, which include details of every aspect of the land girls’ contribution to Bedfordshire. There are also hundreds of photographs which help to bring individual memoirs to life for future generations.

Enjoy Stuart’s reflections on some of the incidental joys of being sidetracked while looking through those dusty record cards from the 1940s.

TED MARTIN
Notes and news

Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service. Over the last 100 years the county record office for Bedfordshire has had several different names. Originally known as Bedfordshire County Muniments our first change of name took place in 1930 when we became Bedfordshire County Record Office. This name lasted until 1997 when Luton Borough Council became a unitary authority and it was felt that we should reflect that we were funded by both Bedfordshire County Council and Luton Borough Council. At the time there was also a wish to show that we operate both a records management service for semi-current records and a service for those records that have been selected to be kept permanently as archives. This led to the adoption of the very long name Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service.

Although this name reflected the funding arrangements for the service and the two branches of the service it always caused problems. It was too long and people were tempted to shorten it to an acronym that meant nothing to anyone. I have been with the service long enough to distinctly remember the staff meeting that declared that we would never use the acronym ourselves but when restricted to a tight word limit even we succumbed. Secondly, people thought that because Luton, a town that has always been in the historic county of Bedfordshire, got a special mention it meant that our office was based in Luton, which has confused lots of people when trying to find us.

In April 2009 Bedfordshire County Council ceased to exist. The service became hosted by Bedford Borough Council and funded by Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils. What to do? We could not make the name even longer to reflect the new funding arrangements and, in a time of great change, it was considered that some stability might be good and so our long and outdated name remained.

Why change now? The frustrations caused by the name have continued. Regularly we have to ask authors, editors and in some cases staff to correct the mistakes they have made in our name and in spite of pleading that no one uses the acronym it keeps popping up. In preparing to apply for Archive Service Accreditation it seemed an appropriate time to make changes so that documentation submitted for the application was in the name we wished to have. Therefore, it was decided that, from our 102nd birthday on the 24th October 2015, we would simplify our name to Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. However, to make things even easier for credit lines and so on, we will also use the shortened forms of Bedfordshire Archives when only referring to the archive service and Bedfordshire Records Service when only referring to the internal records management service. We will not be using any acronyms!
It doesn’t mean that we love Luton less. Bedfordshire Archives has recently increased its holdings of Luton material significantly and has worked with Luton Cultural Services Trust to put on a range of events in Luton, while Bedfordshire Records Service continues to administer hard-copy records for the authority.

PAMELA BIRCH, Service Manager.

From Bedfordshire Archives’ Newsletter, No 105, Autumn 2015

Hidden history revealed in Biggleswade. There was a steady stream of visitors to the Archaeology Open Day beside Potton Road, Biggleswade, on Saturday, 25 July 2015, despite torrential rain on the previous day and road works preventing access to the site from both directions on the day itself! Surprisingly, the rain had not caused a problem, since the site is on free-draining sand and gravel, so there were no muddy paths or water-filled holes and it was possible to see all the features very clearly.

The archaeologists employed on the site (from the Museum of London Archaeology team based in Northampton) were excellent tour guides, pointing out and explaining the features. They were working ahead of a new development of some 300 new houses on the site. In the finds tent, was a good display of early pottery dating mainly from the late Iron Age (about 100 BC) and also a stone quern for grinding grain and a spearhead and knife blade from a later Saxon burial.

![Iron Age combed pot sherd](image1)
![Iron Age stone quern](image2)
![Saxon knife and spear](image3)

The site was clearly the edge of an abandoned Iron Age hutted settlement which had seen later phases of occupation after the Roman invasion and into the Saxon period. Five human burials were found near a circular feature thought to have once been an earlier Bronze Age burial mound of the type identified on Biggleswade Common and elsewhere in this part of the Ivel Valley. The earliest burial was of Iron Age date, two appeared to date from the era of the Roman occupation and the most recent and well-preserved was that of a Saxon man with spear and knife. It will be some time before a report of the dig becomes available.
but we understand that this site has proved so fruitful that further investigations in the vicinity are to be conducted in the near future.

This report by Jane Dale, Editor, Biggleswade History Society Newsletter with photos by Anne Skinner.

The joys of getting side-tracked in historical research

You all know what it’s like – you start looking through a period newspaper intent on searching for that one elusive fact that you’re sure is there somewhere and you get seduced by the fascinating advertisements. It’s happened to everyone who’s ever set out on historical research.

Well, this time I’d set myself the rather daunting task of rifling through 158 boxes of index cards containing over 200,000 service records of young women who had enrolled with the Women’s Land Army (WLA) in the 1940s. Bear in mind that on my first visit to the Imperial War Museum’s outpost in the old RAF buildings at Duxford I had managed to look through one box in a whole day. Only 157 to go! Fortunately a number of people offered to accompany me on the basis of one visit a week, on different days, with the aim of completing the search for the names of women who had either enrolled in Bedfordshire and subsequently served in the county or had been enrolled elsewhere and transferred later for Bedfordshire service. I’d mapped out a schedule which, if it worked, would be completed in about six months.

The boxes were a bit dusty, the cards inside held together in batches by non-politically-correct elastic bands (archivists wouldn’t do it today!). which had deteriorated and might break at any moment if handled. Apart from a few searches for individuals’ names in the A to Z archive over the years, no one had ever been through them all systematically as far as the staff there knew. I was the first to attempt the task – there’s one born every minute, they say!

What has this got to do with getting side-tracked? Our task was straightforward, each card was set out in a particular way and one quickly trained one’s eyes to look in the relevant places for the magic word ‘Bedfordshire’ and went from there, either not finding it and moving on to the next card or finding it, quietly exclaiming ‘Yes!’ and then reading and recording the vital information about a particular young woman.
Each card gave the person’s name, WLA number, address at enrolment, age, date of birth, former occupation, date of enrolment, the dates of any transfers to other counties, the date when the woman left the service and the reason for leaving. Nothing too exciting there, you might think: but not a bit of it.

What one was looking at was a snapshot of a whole generation of girls and young women (most were in their late teens on entry to the WLA) and what it revealed was fascinating. The extraordinary range of names, both surname and first names, the types of work they had done before joining, the place names from which they came, how some settled to being land girls in one place for a number of years and how others were getting transferred all over the place to half a dozen counties during their period of service. After a while it became obvious that we researchers were going to get side-tracked into endless conversations about what we’d just found and forget what it was we were there to do. It was good fun but there was a deadline to work to – we could be there for years if we weren’t disciplined enough to drive on and concentrate on the job in hand. So I came up with an idea – why not formalise the business of getting side-tracked. Every time someone came across what they thought was a fascinating card, we would photocopy it and put it to one side for later consideration.

This enabled us to both get on with the job, yet at the same time not miss the wonderful opportunity of sharing some interesting material (even if it had nothing to do with Bedfordshire) which might otherwise be lost. These additional sheets were kept by me in a folder for a rainy day and I’m looking at them now as I write.

Were we peculiar in actually getting some pleasure in looking at the same, uniform faded index cards with their mainly-handwritten information? I don’t think so. They gave us an insight into England as it was at the end of the 1930s and early 1940s. They hinted at the world of their parents who had named them in the early 1920s or even earlier. They revealed a world of work which in many cases would become ‘history’ in the post-war world – job titles which related to the world of the textile mills and tasks no longer undertaken; work associated with machines which would become redundant as technology developed – ‘comptometer operator’, for example. It was the pleasure of the words and the temptation to read between the lines and behind the bald facts to
imagine the lives of these young women and how they were to be affected by their wartime service in the fields of Bedfordshire.

Family names listed on the cards revealed ones I had never heard of, although many family historians may have come across some of them: Scamp, Addy, Buttling, Sprinks, Bramble, Aistrop and how about Calmady-Hamlyn? Some land girls had foreign names: Yentscher, Perreau, Povah, Wimpfheimer and Teutscher? And some of their names were sufficiently Teutonic to make them rather uncomfortable to use during the war. At least one of them I came across had changed their name to save unnecessary problems, from Fohrwesser to Forster. Another rather sad case of change of name was when one of the quite rare married members of the WLA reverted to her maiden name when ‘her marriage was annulled as the man was a bigamist’.

First names provided yet more extraordinary examples of what had become fashionable in the 1920s and what had lingered on, in some case from Victorians times. How often today do we come across Agnes, Mildred, Ethel, Olive, Doris or Maude? But some survivors from earlier periods seem even more archaic. Surprisingly, Puritan qualities persisted in the names Temperance, Constance, Truth, Patience and Grace. Feminine flowers and plants lived on: Ivy, Primrose, Clematis, Violet, Daisy and Rose. Short names with similar endings were popular: Nellie, Hetty, Nancy, Minnie, Queenie, Fanny and Betty. Gwendoline reminds us of Oscar Wilde plays and Amelia is distinctly Victorian. Some names are drawn from biblical, classical or literary origins: Tryphena, Priscilla, Lydia, Dorcus, Cordelia, Philomena, Hermione, Dorothea, Beatrice, Esther, Hilda and Gertrude. Emmeline and Rosaleen are redolent of American Southern State glee club songs. And royalty has had an influence with Victoria and even Albertina. Other examples of feminine versions of men’s names I noticed were Georgina, Bernadette, Augusta and Edwina. But I didn’t set out to study people’s names – I’ve got distracted again!

Place names were an endless source of pleasure and amusement as we worked our way through the archive. Who could not be attracted or intrigued by Fairweather Green, Tingley, Sheepy Magna, Birdwell, Etruria, Hassocks, Intake, Blish Hillak, Skipbridge, Raw Gap, Portabello, Sandal, Cleobury Mortimer, Dingle, Necropolis Road, Hanging Heaton, Bunny, Wopping and Knotty Ash. Bill Bryson (American writer of Notes from a Small Island) would be in ecstasy.
The association of certain occupations with particular parts of the country was noticeable early on in the research. One could very soon, when seeing the name of certain Yorkshire and Lancashire towns, predict correctly that the young woman worked in one of the mills. And it was the specific roles which girls played in the mill processes which gave rise to unusual and sometimes intriguing job titles: ‘mopper and bobber’, ‘durler’, ‘attender’, ‘spotter’, ‘weft taker’, ‘ring dafter’, ‘rumbler’ and ‘warper’.

Outside the mills, the range of occupations was extraordinary: ‘rabbit skinner’, ‘bottle washer’ (someone’s got to do it), ‘artificial limb worker’, ‘wet rubber worker’ (make your own mind up on that one), ‘doll stuffer’, ‘jigsaw maker’, ‘folder of bags’, ‘shroud maker’ and ‘bulb shaper’ were just a few of the unusual or mundane activities from which someone earned a living. Even in Bedfordshire we found that one girl had a steady job as a ‘crayon sharpener’ at the Crayola factory in Bedford, and a Luton girl was a ‘feather mounter’ in the hat trade.

Guessing what the girl’s occupation might be could easily become an ancillary activity while working through the cards. The sight of the word ‘Liverpool’ would instantly bring to mind the popular football pools firms (where punters gambled on the likely result of matches), such as Vernons or Littlewoods, and one was often right. It was not surprising that a former ‘surgical knife grinder’ came from Sheffield.

The majority of recruits to the WLA were shop workers, mill and factory workers, domestic servants or office workers, with a sprinkle of cinema usherettes (there were around 4,600 cinemas in the 1940s, when it was the main form of entertainment).

Among the rarer occupations I noted was ‘gold stamping’. Sometimes, the lack of language skills among the WLA administrative assistants would lead to quite amusing entries, such as ‘Present Occupation: Tin Box’, or ‘Chocolate girl’ and ‘Ice-cream and soda fountain dispenser’.

Although most of the input of young women came from working class backgrounds and manual jobs, there were some who clearly came from more middle-class homes with former occupations, where they had them, listed as opera singer, elocution teacher, and one land girl is recorded as having ‘Bought her own farm’.

A number of women came from the world of entertainment: ‘professional ice skater’, ‘stage and television actress’ (no chance of any more television work during the war!), ‘stage dancer’ and ‘gymnastic
music hall artiste’. No doubt they used their skills to entertain their fellow land girls and local villagers during the war.

There were some girls who would appear to be rather glamorous, if their stated ‘former occupation’ was anything to go by: ‘calendar girl’, ‘artist’s model’, and even ‘stripper’. I must admit that at seeing the last one I did picture a rural scene when the men on the farm were being rewarded for their hard labour in the fields with an impromptu show. On reflection, she probably operated an industrial process involving acid or removing insulation from electrical wires.

The only time that sexual activity was implied, was when the word ‘pregnant’ appeared and there was no reference to ‘getting married’ or as the WLA quaintly put, being ‘no longer mobile’. Such an action was deemed in the 1940s, in this all-female organisation, as being worthy of dismissal or discharge. In a rare moment of indiscretion on the part of the local WLA Secretary, it was noted that a particular Kent land girl, a former ‘general maid’ aged 19, had ‘Left owing to love affair with married man’ and had refused to move away to another county.

Being a land girl sometimes required that you worked in the fields with prisoners of war and there were strict rules about so-called ‘fraternisation with the enemy’. One young woman from Caernarvon is accused of ‘Consorting with Germans, needs constant supervision that [she] wouldn’t get in the Women’s Land Army’. At other times it is the country of origin of the land girl recruit, which raises doubts and concerns in the organisation. One girl with a German surname but described as ‘a German Jewess – resident in England for 4 years’ is accepted but sent to join the Scottish WLA (possibly, out of harm’s way?). A French woman, at the very beginning of the war, applies giving a French home address and is rejected although she is living in England at the time. Could it have been that the real concern about possible spies and infiltrators led the leaders of the WLA to play safe? Conversely, one land girl, a former mental nurse, resigned ‘To take up service with the Fighting French Forces’.

It is very clear that some girls just didn’t know what they had let themselves in for, which was hard physical work in often very dirty surroundings and sometimes with unsympathetic farmers and landladies. Many town and city dwellers had never visited the countryside in their life and certainly knew nothing of its ways. One poor girl was recorded as having resigned from the Isle of Wight WLA as she was ‘terrified of cows’.
'Are you frightened of cows?' was one of the standard questions usually asked at the initial interview. Either this recruit had not been asked it or she just didn’t realise how large and intimidating cows can be when you are up close to them.

Others, even with the best of intentions to sticking to it and making a success of being a land girl, found that the work was just too physically demanding. There are certainly cases where the recruit is recorded as being ‘not strong enough for land work’ and in one case ‘Found land work too strenuous, collapsed several times and had to leave training’. Even those who were fit enough to do the work, did not necessarily find that they could cope with being removed from their home circumstances and loved ones and having to relate to strangers, some of whom might be quite hostile to these ‘townies’ and ‘foreigners’ (from other parts of the country). One land girl lasted one week and was described as ‘Hopeless’. Sometimes actual disabilities revealed themselves: ‘So deaf as to seriously inconvenience the farmer’.

In some cases, temperament played its part: ‘Resigned after trying three different posts and being unhappy in each. She was willing and did her best but seemed quite unable to get on with the work, in spite of a good training report’, was written about a girl from Watford in March 1941. She’d previously been a clerk. Others weren’t prepared to accept the various petty rules and were ‘Discharged for failing to comply with Land Army conditions of employment’. One card says, ‘Constantly going home and not returning – has no idea of her obligations’.

Others just didn’t like the work and came up with various excuses to leave. One 17 year old claimed to be suffering from rheumatism but a rather indiscreet County Secretary wrote on her card: ‘This girl is a malingerer’. A young woman from Manchester, a former dress machinist, resigned almost as soon as she started and was dismissed as being a ‘Belligerent type of girl. Refused to work after one day and went home’. ‘Took a dislike to work and became so bad-tempered that farmers would not keep her’, reveals another report. One ‘refused to work on farm after 5pm . . . ’ and had been ‘continually grumbling since arrival in the county’. In the days before equal opportunities and political correctness, one girl’s card was marked at the enrolment stage as: ‘Unsatisfactory: rejected (Socialist, etc).’
A threshing gang of land girls based at Bolnhurst WLA hostel.

Pitching hay to load a cart at Luton Hoo. On the ground are Peggy Richardson (left) and Barbara Newell.

Most hostel land girls worked in travelling gangs doing hand work in the fields, but many working just for one farmer drove tractors and operated agricultural machinery.

Gladys Minns caring for sheep on Prole’s farm, Elstow.

Nancy Karn, on the tractor, and Ruth Bennett at Brown’s Willoughby Farm, Great Barford.

Post-war Chimney Corner hostel land girls plan how to fight the Colorado Beetle pest outbreak in 1948.
Very occasionally an issue of conscience is raised. Even though the WLA’s peaceful work on the land provided a haven for many who might be unhappy serving in the armed forces, the occasional member’s religious conscience prompts a change of heart. Even though there was a war on, a 23 year old is allowed by the Ministry of Labour, in September 1942, to become a Franciscan missionary. Most peculiarly, one young woman decided that for reasons of conscience she must refuse to wear breeches, even though they were the stated uniform of the service.

Given the introduction of conscription of women from 1942 onwards it is not surprising that the increased cross-section of society which was obliged to take on war work would lead to a minority of women entering the land girl fraternity who were less than desirable: ‘Unsatisfactory morals’; ‘Extremely dirty personal habits which made her unfit for
billeting’; ‘Bad behaviour in the hostel. Drunk and disorderly’. One rejected girl is described ‘as light-fingered’ (and they didn’t mean good at disbudding tomato plants in a market garden!).

Desertion or ‘refusing to return after leave’ was a common reason for discharge but usually this was after many months or years of service when, clearly, things just got too much and the land girls just couldn’t face the work situation any longer. Often homesickness and separation would have played a part. This is not evident from the bald facts of the service records but only from the many written or spoken memoirs of former land girls. They were often quite immature girls, away from home for the first time and finding it hard to cope. And farmers were not always sympathetic to their problems nor prepared to adjust their expectations and manner accordingly.

What is surprising is that even after many years’ service, some incident or outburst by a particular land girl could lead to them being dismissed and labelled as ‘unsuitable’, when they had already proved their ability to work hard. The WLA staff in general sometimes appear as rather inflexible and unsympathetic to these young women. At the same time, of course, they were under pressure to please farmers and market gardeners, who themselves were subject to enormous pressure to reach food production targets. The pressures of war were felt across society, even if the reality of war, such as enemy bombing of civilian targets, impinged less on most of the land girls, based as they were in predominantly rural areas.

But the records do occasionally bring one up sharply. You turn to the next card and it reads, ‘Died owing to enemy action’ or ‘Killed by V2’ (pilotless rockets) and suddenly the war intrudes into the lives of the land girls. Down in Kent, in the area known as ‘Bomb Alley’ immediately opposite German-occupied France, land girls were frequently machine-gunned in the fields by enemy planes and often had to wear tin hats. But even those land girls who worked in distant and peaceful areas of the country might return home one weekend to parents in one of the cities and be unlucky enough to be caught up in the conflict. One girl returned to Deptford to stay at home for the weekend and died with her parents when their house in Adolphus Street was hit by a bomb. After two years’ service in Somerset, another land girl was ‘Killed in London by enemy action’. Many others were injured in raids, mainly when visiting towns.
and cities. Even the WLA’s own records were affected: ‘papers . . . lost in the Blitz’ appears on a card of October 1944.

The wartime context of the Women’s Land Army’s existence also comes across in the occasional references to former wartime occupations of recruits: ‘ARP’ (Air Raid Precautions officer), ‘Anti-Gas Clothing Machinist’, ‘Munitions Worker’, ‘ATS’ (member of the women’s army, Auxiliary Territorial Service) and even ‘Packing sailors’ hats’.

I’ve not yet mentioned the matter of the unique WLA number given to each recruit. On no, I hear you cry – surely the author can’t get excited about numbers, now. I’m afraid so. When I came across the card bearing the number WLA 199,999 I was delighted. When I saw another card recording WLA 200,300 – thus confirming that the final tally of recruited land girls was over 200,000 – I was very excited. (Other members of my volunteer team must have come across even higher numbers, since the stated maximum number achieved was over 203,000 young women recruited between 1939 and 1949, the last year when recruiting took place before disbandment of the WLA on 30 November 1950.)

Similarly, although the age given on entry was most usually 17 or so years, up to the early 20s, occasionally a much older age hit one in the eye. One had to admire plucky Mrs Borton of Maidstone, Kent, applying to join, in 1939, at the age of 74 years. She wasn’t accepted but it says a lot for her attitude to the forthcoming conflict – she was determined to do her bit, as, no doubt, she had done during the First World War. In fact, a number of mature ladies who had been land girls in the first WLA were allowed to serve in the WLA during the Second World War, bringing no doubt, a wealth of experience if not the vigour of youth.

At the other end of the scale there were under-age recruits. Many 16-year-old girls attempted (and in some cases succeeded) in registering for the WLA (by changing the date on their birth certificate by one year) even though 17½ was the official minimum and only then if the particular girl seemed mature enough to leave home. A number of the Bedfordshire recruits I interviewed as part of my oral history research admitted to cheating and entering under-age.

So there we have it. I set out just to discover the names and basic service record of what I expected to be a few hundred young women who served in Bedfordshire. I came away, not only with a list of 3,306, but with a fascinating insight into their social background and the end of a particular period in English history. At the time when they entered the
WLA there were still domestic servants in every self-respecting middle-
class home and some of the young entrants to the WLA who had left
school but were not yet doing paid work would describe themselves as
‘mother’s help’. The disruption which the war brought to society then is
mirrored in the disruption which their service in Bedfordshire brought to
individual young women, many of them from elsewhere in the country,
who often married down here and never returned.

One name kept cropping up to surprise me among the familiar
Christian names of the land girls – Rosina. Where on earth did this exotic
name come from? Had their mother seen some romantic film in the
1920s whose female lead had this Mediterranean name? Perhaps I should
do some research into film history? You never know where this historical
research passion leads to, do you? Next time you look at a newspaper
from the past and get seduced by the advertisements – beware!

STUART ANTROBUS

Notes
This article originally appeared in two parts in *Bedfordshire Family History Journal*, Volume 17, No 6, June 2010 and No 7, September 2010.

Stuart Antrobus has now completed the Roll Call section of his website on Bed-
fordshire Women’s Land Army [WLA]:

http://virtuallibrary.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.wla/wla_bedford
shire_roll_call.htm

(or enter ‘Bedfordshire Women’s Land Army’ into GOOGLE Search and click on the
links).

For those who do not have access to the internet, a printed reference copy of his
*Bedfordshire Land Girls List 1939–1950* is available in the Heritage Library (open Tuesdays
only) at Bedford Central Library. The Roll Call gives full maiden name (plus married
name, where known), WLA number, start and finish service dates, date of birth and place
and county at the time of enrolment for 3,306 land girls who served at some time in the
1940s in Bedfordshire.

For general information on the Women’s Land Army (during the First and Second
World Wars), the Bedfordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee (the ‘War Ag’) and
wartime farming, Bedfordshire land girl hostels, a WLA timeline and local land girls
memoirs, see the Bedfordshire Libraries Virtual Library local and family history website
on ‘Bedfordshire Women’s Land Army’, giving Stuart’s full research findings.

For both reference and lending copies of his definitive local history book on the WLA,
see your local Bedfordshire library:

Stuart Antrobus. *We wouldn’t have missed it for the world: the Women’s Land Army in

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