

Women in Forestry

Olive Edgley

Women's Timber Corps



When war broke out Olive and her twin sister, Vera, lived in a house on the side of Lake Ullswater. They had the choice of joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), Women's Royal Navy (WRENS) or the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF), but one of Vera's friends said working on the timber was so fantastic that they both decided to join the Women's Land Army and went straight into forestry work.

The Women's Land Army was first set up in January 1917 for WWI and was re-formed in June 1939 to increase the country's food supply during WW2. Over 200,000 member of the Women's Land Army replaced male workers on dairy farms, became rat catchers, fruit pickers or crop producers. At the beginning of the war women were recruited into forestry work through the Women's Land Army.

But it wasn't until April 1942 that the Women's Timber Corps, a branch of the Women's Land Army, was officially established. As many as 15-18,000 young women left home for the first time, aged 17-24, to fell trees with an axe and saw for the war effort. Doing what was thought to be 'a man's job', these pioneering women brought gender stereotypes crashing down.