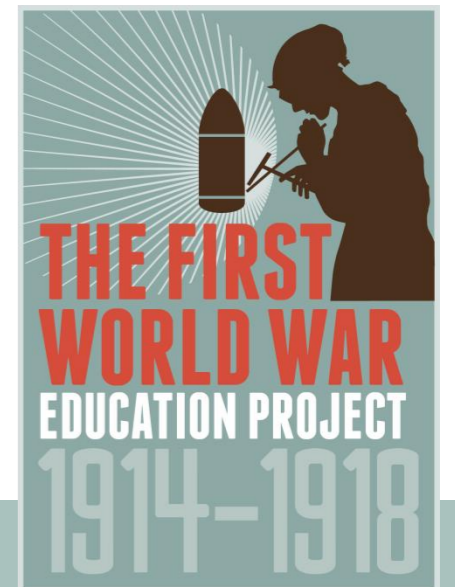




# The role of women during the First World War



## Women before The First World War

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the roles of men and women were very different from what they are today. Women were expected to marry, have children and take care of their homes and families.

Some women would begin working as servants immediately after leaving school at 12 years of age having received only a basic education. Work as domestic or agricultural servants could be extremely difficult. It could mean working long hours in difficult circumstances, receiving low pay and very little holidays during the year. In 1901 more than half the women employed in Wales worked in domestic service.



Farm servants milking cows in the fields

**W**ANTED, an experienced Housemaid; Welsh; good Needlewoman.—Write, Mrs Lloyd, Plas Tregayan, Llangwyllog, Anglesev. 1431c

### WANTED AT ONCE,

**A** GENERAL, age about 18, with reference—Wages 5s to 6s a week.

ALSO,

A good plain Cook, for Nov. 17th, with reference, good wages—both above for Manchester

ALSO,

HOUSE PARLOUR MAID & KITCHEN MAID for Southport. Wages £22 & £14. Reference required. Address—

Mrs. J. GOODWIN,

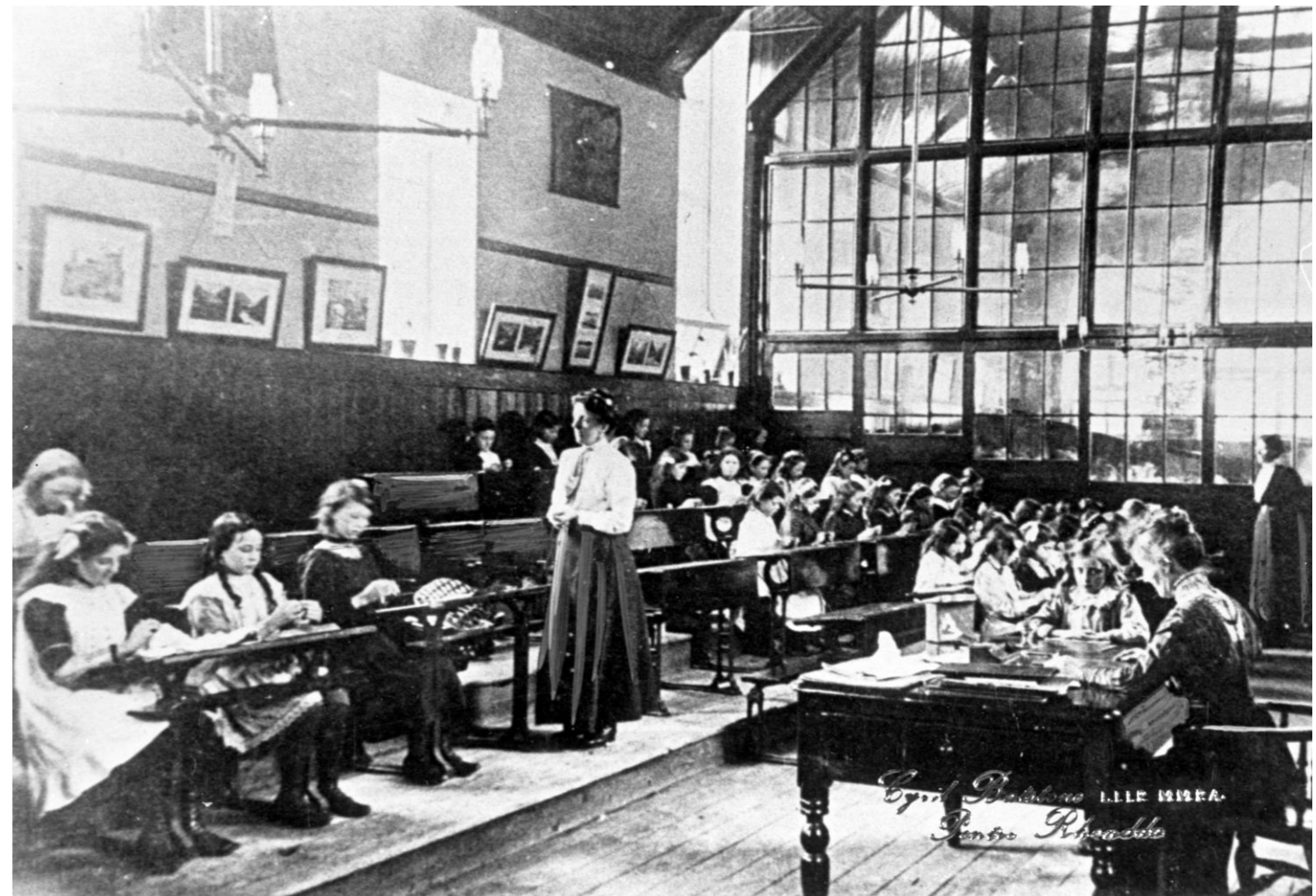
Select Registry,

21, Princess St.,

Rusholme,

Stamp for reply.

Manchester.



In 1900 around 124,000 women were employed as teachers. Once they were married women were expected to resign from their jobs as teachers.

Advertisements for house and farm servants were common in the newspapers during this period.

## Women before The First World War

The lives of many women changed during the First World War. There was a shortage of labour and munitions and the Government started recruiting women into the munitions factories to replace the men who had joined the forces.

Jobs that had previously been seen as work for men such as transport, agriculture, heavy industry and engineering were now filled by women. Women were now beginning to be viewed as members of the workforce and not just as mothers and wives.

### Unfair wages

'...women are now engaged in types of work previously kept for men, for which they are paid, if not at men's rates, at rates higher than they received before.'

An article about women's wages published in the journal of the **Royal Statistical Society** in 1919.

- The wages of women who did the same work as men in the munitions factories increased to 35s. This was still lower than the wages of the men who worked in the same factories.
- On average women earned between 10s and 15s a week before the war. By 1919 they were earning between 25s and 35s a week.



## OUR WOMEN WARRIORS.

“Women are now part and parcel of our great Army,” said the Earl of Derby on July 13th, 1916; “without them it would be impossible for progress to be made; but with them I believe that victory is assured.”

Statement by Lord Derby, the War Secretary at the time, about the importance of women to the war effort *Monmouth Guardian*, January 12, 1917

‘Heavy work (Drilling and casting)’



## Women in factories

The Government were forced to recruit women to replace the men who had joined the armed forces. Many women went to work in the munitions factories that produced weapons, bullets and shells. These women were called *munitionettes*.

With an increasing number of women working in industries which had previously employed men new and improved facilities were introduced to the workplace, such as washing rooms and canteens. However, they still earned far less than their male colleagues.



The propaganda of the time encouraged women to contribute to the war effort by working in the munitions factories.

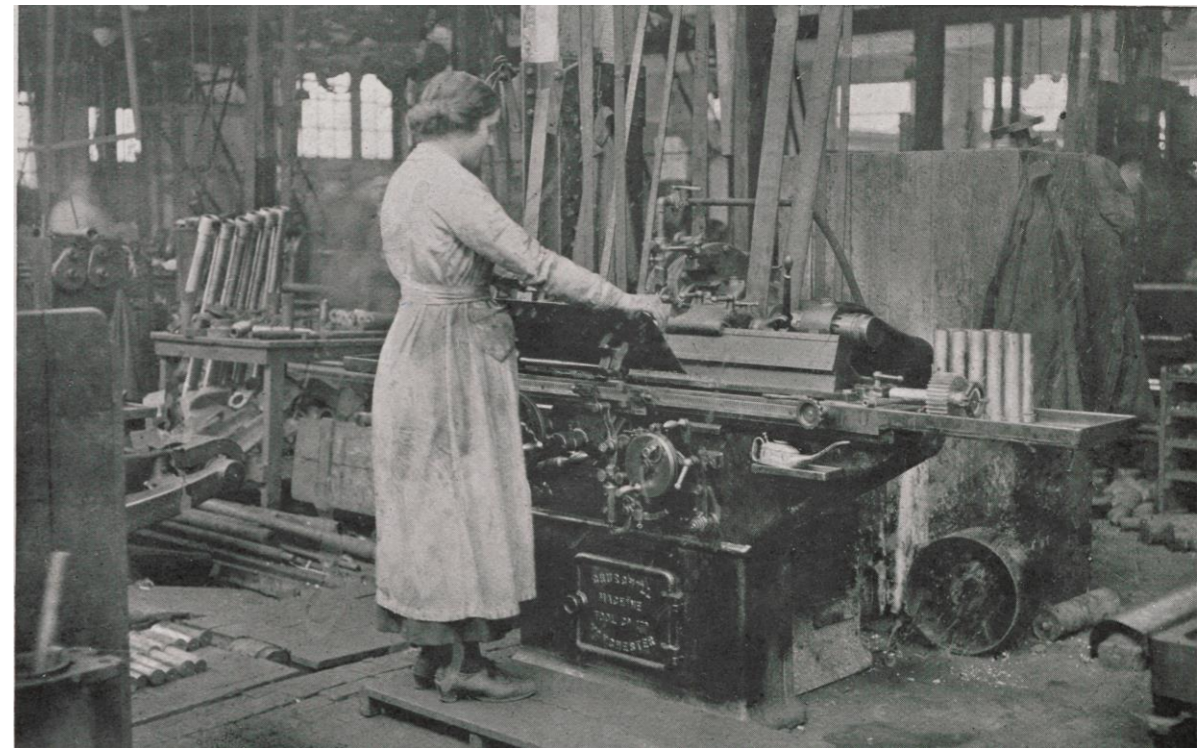
In 1917 the Government's Propaganda Office published a series of prints by various artists under the title *Efforts and Ideals* to inspire people on the Home Front. Women were among the groups being targeted by this propaganda.

**'Dangerous Work (Packing the T.N.T)'**



Two engine turnings were managed by one woman

Sawing and sharpening parts for the production of shells



Powell's Brother's *Cambrian Foundry*, Wrexham. This was converted from a factory manufacturing agricultural machinery to one that produced trench mortar bombs. Its workforce was mainly female.

## Women in factories

The *Llanelli National Shell & Rectification Factory* was opened in 1917 to repair and modify defective shells.

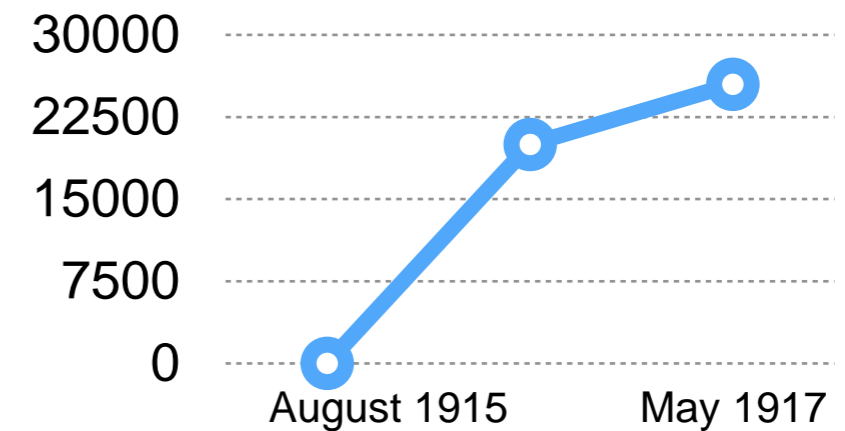


*Llanelli National Shell & Rectification Factory*

The factory was customized to produce six-inch shells, and in 1917 the site was expanded to modify 18lb shells into six-inch shells.

By the end of the war the majority of the workforce were women, and they had modified 286,000 shells.

The number of women working at the Woolwich Arsenal



The Woolwich Arsenal in London was one of the Government's main munitions factories.

*History of the Ministry of Munitions: The National Factories*



The *Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron & Coal Company* shell factory was opened in 1915 and employed mainly women.

## Accidents at work

After the end of the war the weapons factory at Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, was used to dismantle rather than produce shells. On November 18, 1918, Mary Fitzmaurice (36), Jane Jenkins (21) and Edith Ellen Copham (19) were killed in an explosion. Two other girls were also injured.

All three were from Swansea and Edith and Mary were buried in Dan-y-graig cemetery to the east of the town.

A large funeral procession led by a brass band walked through the High Street followed by 500 women from the factory in their uniforms. In the eulogy given to them in the *South Wales Weekly Post* it was noted that the crowds saluted as the hearse went past.



The funeral procession as it walked along High Street.

The work of the *munitionettes* was dirty and dangerous. They worked long hours under difficult circumstances with explosions occurring in some of the factories. Their health was also at risk because of having to handle T.N.T which was poured into the shells. This could cause their hair and skin to turn yellow and they were nicknamed **canaries**.

(a) *Copper Band Turning.*

During this process workers are apt to inhale metallic dust or fumes, and symptoms suggesting irritant poisoning were noted in a number of cases.

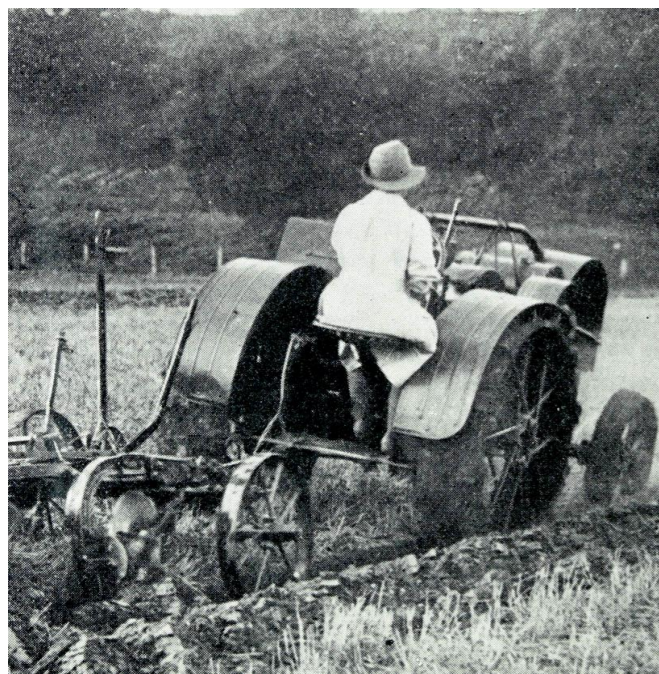
At *Factory No 3 (Yorkshire)* an examination of 26 women showed that at least 20 of the workers were conscious of a metallic taste with dryness and pricking of the throat, especially after night duty. Nausea was present in 16 and four had occasional attacks of vomiting and diarrhoea. Nose bleeding occurred in two workers.

Fatigue of the eyes and headache were observed in a large number of cases from the glare of artificial light on the rotating copper band. These symptoms suggest that women are occasionally suffering from mild attacks of irritant poisoning due to impurity in the copper dust, and it seems possible that arsenic may be the exciting cause. This is supported by a conversation with the manager, who stated that arsenic is frequently found as an impurity in the copper and that the amount varies at different times; occasionally the copper bands are unduly soft and more dust is produced in rotation.

A report published by the Ministry of Munitions in 1918 on the working conditions of the munitionettes.

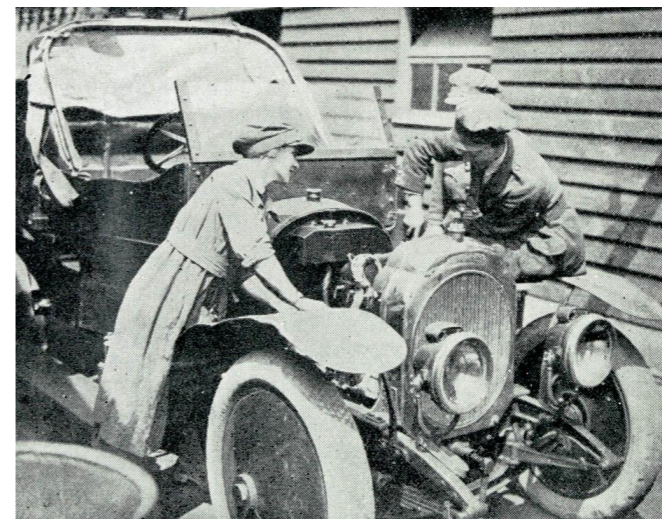
## Women's organisations

The First World War gave women an opportunity to contribute to the war effort on the Home Front and abroad.



SWANSEA WOMEN AND  
THE WAR.  
RECRUITING MEETING FOR  
THE W.A.A.C.

A member of the Land Army driving a motor plough



Members of WAAC working on a car

Gladys Mary Evans in Women's Land Army uniform. She was born in Port Talbot and worked as a volunteer in the gardens and grounds of St Fagans Castle after the male workers on the estate had gone to war.



Members of the Women's Land Army harvesting corn at Gelli Cadwgan Farm, Builth Wells, 1917

**W.R.N.S** Part of the British Royal Navy. Women worked as engineers, electricians, cooks, radar officers and administrators.

**W.A.A.C** Part of the British Army. Women were involved with communication and transport jobs, for example, maintaining cars.

**W.R.A.F** Part of the R.A.F established in April 1918. Women worked as drivers, engineers, welders, cooks in the forces' kitchens and as seamstresses in the workshops.


**Women's Land Army** Their main work included cultivating land, growing crops and ensuring a constant supply of food for the horses on the Home and fighting fronts. They also ensured that there was a ready supply of wood for paper production and for the needs of industry.

# Women's organisations

The variety of work in the Women's Land Army

**THE WOMEN'S ARMY.**  
Land Girls in War-Time.

**THEY MILK THE COWS**



(British Official. 2)

**WOMEN ON THE LAND.**  
Successful Meeting at Newbridge-on-Wye.

**BRECONSHIRE WOMEN'S WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE.**

Agricultural committees were established across the country to organise women's work on the land.


Part of a pamphlet published in November 1917 to recruit more than 1,000 women to help with harvesting flax during July and August 1918.

The pamphlet emphasised that flax was essential for aeroplane production and lists the benefits of this work.

**A WOMEN'S ARMY.**  
How They are Enrolled for Land Work.

The girls do every sort of work, from the more ordinary kinds to thatching and mole-catching. Recruits must enrol for six months, when they are sent straight on the farms, or for a year, in which case they are given six weeks' free training. This applies to the Agricultural and to the Timber Cutting Sections of the Land Army. Those who wish to work for Forage, on a hay-baling machine under the War Office, must sign on for twelve months. These girls are doing excellent work in sending hay to the Front, and the usefulness of the timber gangs also can hardly be exaggerated. At this time, however, the food shortage makes us lay special stress on the Agricultural Section, which includes milking, dairy work, the care of all kinds of stock and poultry, market gardening, tractor-ploughing, and every kind of field work.

**AND FEED THE PIGS**



An appeal in newspapers

**AND TRUSS THE LOADS OF HAY.**



(British Official.)

- The following are the concessions and guarantees obtained:-
- (1) An increase of over 25% in rate of pay.
  - (2) A higher rate for "bad" fields.
  - (3) A standing wage when not working, viz: 3/- per day in wet weather, and same rate for loss of time when changing to a fresh farm.
  - (4) Gang leaders - 1 to every 15 workers - 5/- per week extra.
  - (5) Accommodation in cottages or tents with damp-proof floors, and adequate sanitary accommodation.
  - (6) Billeting near work, or if two miles away, a bicycle rate of a penny a mile paid.
  - (7) Transport for further distances.
  - (8) Full fare paid if worker stays full period; otherwise reduced rates, viz: a return ticket for a fare and a quarter at pre War rates.

To make England entirely self-supporting, and to release even more men for the Front and more food ships for American transports, the Land Army is appealing for 30,000 recruits. It is, perhaps, the call of the hour.



## Women's organisations



During the war there were 5 military hospitals and 113 auxiliary hospitals in Wales. The Red Cross and the St. John Ambulance Society managed the auxiliary hospitals while the army managed the military ones.

Many women from Wales joined as volunteers with V.A.D (*Voluntary Aid Detachments*) to support the work of the Red Cross and the St. John Ambulance Society. They worked alongside nurses and doctors who were paid to look after injured soldiers.

Olwen Carey-Evans, David Lloyd George's daughter, was a Red Cross volunteer and worked as a cook on the fighting front in 1915.



A photograph of soldiers who were patients at the Red Cross VAD which was established within the grounds of St Fagans Castle.

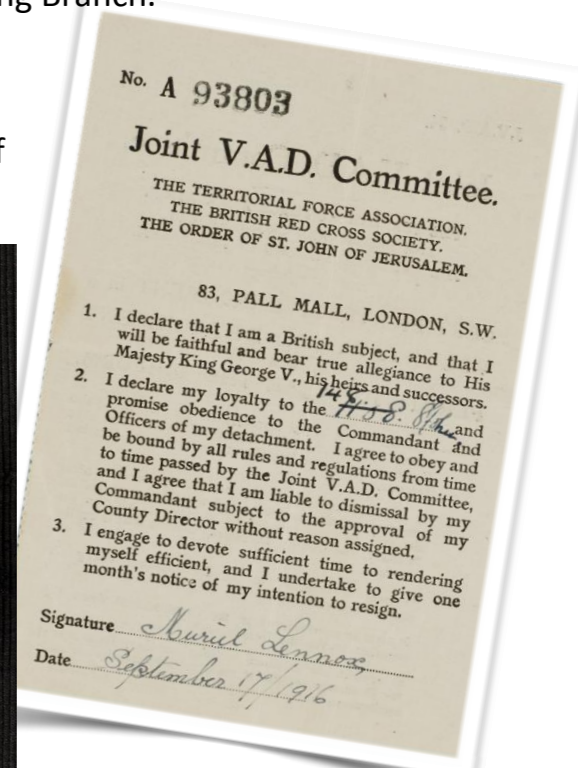


With the beginning of the First World War VAD branches and hospitals were established in many of the main towns in Britain.

VAD members could work as ambulance drivers, cooks or nurses.

Studio portrait of Muriel Lennox, a VAD nurse and a member of the St. John Ambulance Society Barry Nursing Branch.

The VAD badge is shown on the arm of Muriel Lennox in the photograph.



VAD membership card.

**A PUBLIC MEETING  
WILL BE HELD**

IN THE  
**PUBLIC HALL,  
CLYDACH,**

On Tuesday, Dec. 11th, at 7.30 p.m.

The Meeting will be addressed by  
representatives of the W.A.A.C.

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED.

**W.A.A.C**

**WOMEN'S ARMY  
AUXILIARY CORPS.**

To work with the Forces either at Home or  
Abroad. Good Wages, Uniforms, Quarters, Rations.

**10,000 Women needed each month.**

**Enrol to-day**


and release a Fit Man for the Fighting Forces.

For full particulars of classes of work to be done, terms and  
conditions of service, and all other information and advice,  
**Write to or call at nearest Employment Exchange.**

The address can be obtained from any Post Office.

The Cambrian Daily Leader, 8 December, 1917

" Mae Meibion  
Cymru'n galw ! "



**Women of Wales!**

THE women of Austria gave their golden wedding-rings because their country needed money. The women of Germany cut off their hair because their country needed it for munitions.

Never must it be said that Welsh women were surpassed in patriotism by the women of Germany and Austria.

**Take your savings to the  
TANK!**

**Back up our Lads at the Front!**

You are not asked to give: only to lend your money to your country. By buying National War Bonds and War Savings Certificates at the Tank you will be helping the men of our own glorious Welsh Regiments—the husbands and brothers and sweethearts and sons of the Women of Wales. Use your money to strengthen their battle line—to hasten the day of Victory, the end of War, the dawn of Peace.

**TO-MORROW  
the Tanks will be at  
Port Talbot and Aberavon  
and Maesteg.**

**Next Week's Programme.**  
June 17th—June 22nd.

June 17.—Newport and Maesteg.	June 20.—Newport and Barry.
June 18.—Newport and Bridgend.	June 21.—Newport and Barry.
June 19.—Newport and Bridgend.	June 22.—Newport and Caerphilly.

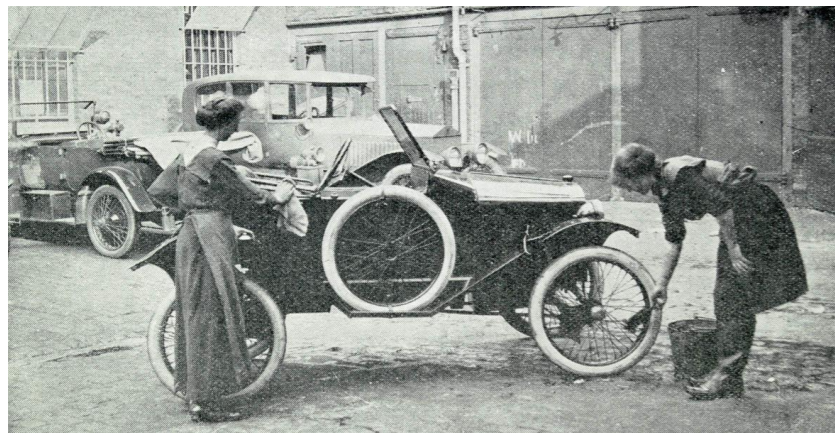
The Cambrian Daily Leader, 14 June, 1918

## Other work on the Home Front

The war provided women with an opportunity to work in fields such as trade and transport.



It was necessary to clear the ash and waste from the locomotive train boilers every day. With the male boiler cleaners having been called to the forces, women were employed to replace them. This was tedious and unglamorous work.



Garage work. Washing and polishing a car.

Women unloading a cargo of potatoes into warehouses at Bute West Dock, Cardiff.



London ambulance drivers wearing their shrapnel helmets during an air raid.



Female staff on Cardiff trams. New uniforms were designed for female staff employed on railways and trams.



## Other work on the Home Front

By the end of the war large numbers of women had worked in industry for the first time and had made important contributions to the war effort.



Women at the *Cwmbran Nut & Bolt Works*. Their supervisor had the surname Makepeace and they were nicknamed **Makepeace Angels**.



Women employed to unload railway wagons of pig iron at Pontardawe Steel Works. By November 1918, 1 in every 10 steelworkers was a woman.

## New opportunities

### WAR WORK FOR WOMEN.

#### TRAINING AS GARDENERS.

In view of the great value at the present time of skilled women workers on the land, a new scheme for providing women and girls with a thorough training in horticulture is particularly opportune and interesting. The Marquis of Anglesey and Colonel the Hon. R. Stapleton Cotton have placed their gardens at Plas Newydd and Llwynon respectively at the disposal of the department of agriculture of the University College of North Wales. The two gardens, which cover several acres, and will be practically worked as one, are exceptionally well suited to the purpose, including as they do, not only vegetables and fruit of all kinds, but also a very extensive range of vinerias, tomato houses, etc. Pupils will work in the gardens practically as apprentices, and will receive payment more than sufficient to cover the cost of their board and lodging, so that the cost of the instruction is practically nothing.

The gardens are run on market garden lines, the whole of the produce being sold, and the object aimed at is to provide such a training that pupils, after completing their course, will be competent either to take up gardens on their own account, or to fill posts as journeymen, or foremen in large gardens.

*The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*  
March 10, 1916



## Volunteering and charity work

With so many men away fighting at the front women were the head of the household in many families.

Many women became involved in voluntary and charity work, raising money and supplies for the soldiers on the fighting front.



A magazine for egg collection to help ill and injured soldiers on the fighting front.

Many women supported the war effort by

- Knitting clothes such as socks
- Collecting books for British prisoners of war
- Saving money to buy war bonds
- Saving and conserving food
- Sending food parcels to fighting soldiers
- Writing letters to prisoners



January 5, 1918

Mrs A.C. Humphreys-Owen  
Dear Madam.

I write to thank you for a parcel that I have just received from Harrods, it could not have arrived at a better time as we were just going into a fight to take a big hill which the Turks held so you see we had a feast before we went. As everything in the parcel was in tins nothing was spoilt, as I am sorry to say that most of the parcels that the Boys receive now are bad. It is so disappointing as they expect to receive them in good condition.

A letter to Mrs. A.C. Humphreys-Owen from one her servants who was fighting abroad.



**'A wasteful cook is the enemy of her country'**

### Pwllheli Women's War Relief Association.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR SEPT-  
EMBER 1915—SEPTEMBER, 1916

#### RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Balance in hand .. .. .	11	1	9
1916. Subscriptions .. .. .	16	19	9
<b>Collections:—</b>			
Penmount .. .. .	6	15	10
St. Peter's .. .. .	2	0	0
Salem .. .. .	2	7	6
Ala Road .. .. .	1	3	3
	12	6	7
Balance from Belgian Committee .. .. .	8	13	6
Concert Troed-yr-Alit School .. .. .	26	1	1
Sale of Xmas Goose .. .. .	2	2	0
Miss Voller—Whist Drive .. .. .	17	0	0
G.F.S. Branch (per Mrs. Williams-Ellis) .. .. .	3	0	0
Proceeds of Jumble Sale .. .. .	61	6	1
Welsh Flag Day Proceeds .. .. .	8	0	6
Sale of Donkey .. .. .	11	0	0
Payment refunded .. .. .	0	2	6
	161	10	9

Committees were established in different areas to raise funds for the war effort.

Yr Udgorn, September 27, 1916



Government propoganda poster urging women to put pressure on men to join up.

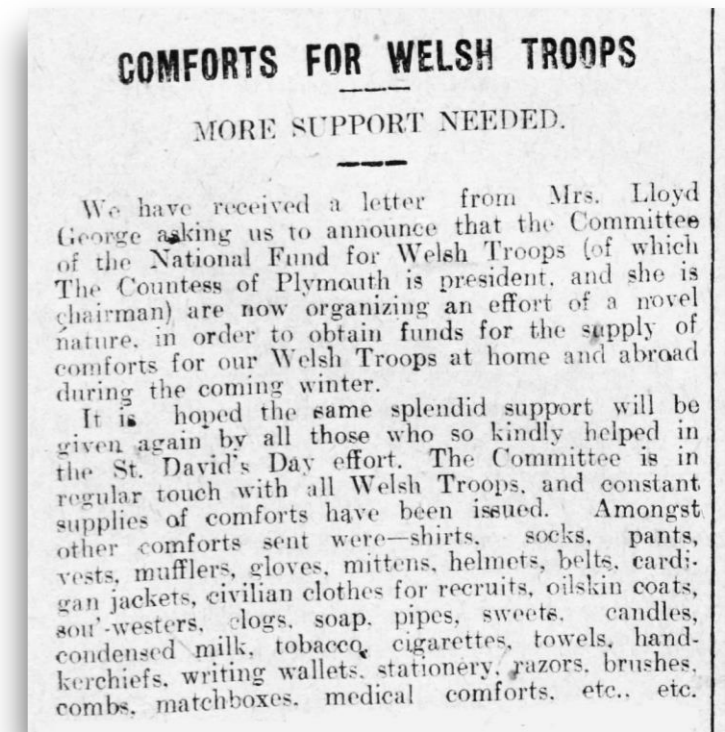
## Volunteering and charity work

Many prominent and wealthy women like Olwen Carey-Evans and her mother Margaret Lloyd George volunteered to work for charities or the forces. Their actions were seen as a boost that encouraged other women to contribute to the war effort.

Margaret Lloyd George was the chair of the **National Fund for Welsh Troops**, an organisation that provided comfort for Welshmen fighting in the war.



The Red Cross and the Order of St. John joined together at the beginning of the war to organise events to raise money for the war effort.



*Carmarthen Journal*, September 1915

# Women after the war?

**WOMEN FRANCHISED.**  
**6,000,000 New Voters Added To List.**

**OUT-OF-WORK WOMEN.**  
**PROBLEM FOR GOVERNMENT**

The out-of-work women will not be quiet after Christmas. There will be trouble with them for certain unless something is done.

They have been working exceedingly hard for years, and they think, after what they have done, they should be properly looked after.

## Political rights

- The Representation of the People Act in 1918 gave married women over the age of 30 the right to vote in General Elections. Women had to wait until 1928 to receive a vote at 21 years of age like men.
- Women were allowed to stand as Members of Parliament.
- Under The Equal Opportunities Act passed in 1919 it was illegal to refuse a woman a job because of her gender.

After the signing of the Armistice the staff was rapidly reduced and it was arranged that by March 31, 1919, the men were to be at the peace strength of 1,800 and all women were to be discharged by January, 1919.<sup>4</sup>

*History of the Ministry of Munitions: The National Factories*

## New freedoms

- Trousers became part of women's fashion and hairstyles such as the 'bob' or 'shingle cut' became popular.
- Some women started to wear make-up and smoke in public.
- Their wartime experiences had given some women a new sense of independence.