

## WOMEN'S WORK IN THE WAR

**E**NGLISHWOMEN played their part manfully in the last war, as every New Zealand soldier remembers. And "manfully" is the correct word, for they donned trousers and uniforms and set to work to fill vacancies left by the men who had gone to the front. They drove taxis and ambulances; they worked on farms; they became bus and lift attendants; they joined all the branches of the armed forces to which women were admitted. And, when the war was over, those trousers they wore became fashionable—and remain fashionable.

I met at Brockenhurst the daughter of a wealthy Singapore merchant. Clad in breeches and leggings she was busily cleaning out cowsheds and pigstyes on a farm, and that remained her job for the duration of the war. Nearby were two other land girls, ploughing as straight a furrow as any man. One was the daughter of a bishop; the other the daughter of a shipping magnate. For the first time in their lives they were learning the meaning of independence. Those girls were typical of thousands of others of all classes who forgot their dressmakers and the social round to help with the more important task of providing food and essential services in time of need. Menial work of the most unpleasant variety was undertaken willingly; they learned the meaning of "work" in its fullest sense, and those new horizons broke down many of the old barriers, never to be rebuilt.

On another New Forest farm I met several land girls who had become shepherds, but not in the New Zealand sense. They cared for their sheep individually, for the flock was only a small one. These girls, known as "little Bo Peeps," sheared the animals laboriously, it is true, but work did not end there. They washed

the wool, dyed it with the aid of mosses and lichens gathered from the forest trees, and with walnuts and tares gathered from the orchard; spun the wool on old fashioned spinning machines and, on hand looms, wove sufficient cloth to make several coats and skirts each year.

As soon as the present war broke out, the women of England joined up once more. They were unprepared in 1914 and organisations, for the most part, were built up as the war progressed. This time every organisation was complete and ready for immediate service. New organisations have come into being since the last war, but the old ones still remain.

### The VAD'S

The best remembered organisation was the Voluntary Aid Detachment, known as the VAD. By 1918 they numbered 126,000; membership when this war broke out was 60,000. VAD's did service in all the New Zealand hospitals, scrubbing out the wards, washing dishes and performing other menial work not done by the nurses. They wore a blue uniform, received a salary of £30 to £40 a year, and included in their ranks the daughters of every class in England. Queen Mary was their nominal head.

### From WAAC'S to WATS

Just as well known were the WAAC's—Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, 57,000 of whom served in France behind the lines. Their title has now been changed to WATS—Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service. They wear a khaki uniform—skirt, tunic and cap, and serve in the army as cooks, clerks, signallers, etc. Many of the WATS are expert motor-cyclists, and no doubt now are a familiar sight again rushing around the roads of France and England.

### The WREN'S

The WREN's (Women's Royal Naval Service), number 2,000. They work at the naval bases as cooks, book-keepers and cipher experts and include in their ranks the wives and daughters of naval officers. WREN's wear a navy uniform with blue ratings.

### WAF'S

The most popular and most eagerly sought organisation is the WAF's—Women's Auxiliary Air Force, which numbers 11,000. These women live in special hostels near the aerodromes, act as cooks and chauffeurs and help the mechanics with the maintenance and repair work, wearing an Air Force blue uniform.

Attached to the WAF's is a subsidiary service known as the FANNIES—First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. This was first formed in 1909 and has never been disbanded. Their job is ambulance driving, both at home and overseas.



**MEET "THE WATS":** Members of the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service parading in London. Students of military technique will notice that they are marching in fours, not "threes," but perhaps the latter reform has not yet reached the auxiliary forces

### WVS

A new organisation known as WVS, Women's Voluntary Service, now numbers half a million members of about 70 different groups brought under one head. These women wear a grey-green overcoat and a badge. They are not paid, and their work is perhaps the most valuable of all. It was the WVS's who evacuated the women, children, and invalids when war was declared, and that story will be one of the grandest and most complete when viewed through the perspective of years. Many of the WVS's are expert car drivers, one of the requirements being that they must know how to back a car 100 yards in total darkness; 25,000 of them have attended agricultural schools where they learned to plough, milk, and drive tractors. The whole organisation has never cost the British Government a penny, though all the other services are paid.

In addition to these organisations, there are many others, such as auxiliary policewomen, who undergo special training for their jobs. There are 2,000 women bus conductors in London alone, and a proportionate number in the other large cities. Then there is the National Federation of Women's Institutes, numbering 300,000 who, as soon as war broke out, began preserving and bottling great quantities of vegetables and fruit.

Finally there are the women who, as in New Zealand, have been busily knitting socks, making undergarments and rolling bandages, ready for any emergency.

### Overheard on the Tram

1st. Dear Old Lady: Where's this 'ere Armageddon?

2nd. Dear Old Lady: Somewhere in France, ain't it? Why?

1st. Dear Old Lady: Well, they say that's where the next war's going to be.

### Books for Soldiers

From London comes the news that the Red Cross hospital library is organising the supply of books and magazines to the British Army. In the last war, millions of books were sent as far afield as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Salonika, and Gallipoli. Whole libraries were handed over, and publishers contributed liberally from their stocks.

The generosity of the people is already being tapped again, both in England and in New Zealand. No doubt it will show itself as inexhaustible as ever. You have the chance to prove it.

Label your parcel "Library Service, Military Camps"; take it to your Public Library or send it to the Country Library Service, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

### OFFICIAL BADGE



A small fern frond will be the official badge of the Second New Zealand Division.

All regimental badges are to be abandoned in the meantime and the fern will replace them as the distinguishing mark of the Division. This will do away with the multiplicity of badges which at present characterise the various New Zealand units and which are rather confusing to overseas people. Under the territorial system each company of each battalion has a separate distinguishing badge. These are at present being worn by many of the territorials who have joined up, but very soon they will be replaced by the fern, the recognised emblem of New Zealand, made so familiar by the All Blacks.

During the 1914-18 war, the only unit which had one general distinguishing badge was the New Zealand Rifle Brigade; all others retained their separate company badges.

Units of the Second New Zealand Division, such as the artillery, signallers, engineers, etc., will be distinguished by coloured hat puggarees and by metal letters containing the initials of that unit worn on the shoulder straps of their tunics.