

Making uniforms (i)

After war broke out, millions of people volunteered for many different services. Some of the new jobs were open only to men, but with many of Britain's young men in the armed forces, most of the volunteer work was also open to women. Here are some parts of uniforms from some of the volunteer services. Choose a volunteer service and make the uniform.

Home Guard/Local Defence Force

What they wore: An armband. A patch showing unit and regiment. Later they wore a complete military uniform.

To make the armband, cut out a piece of fabric that is 9 cm wide and long enough to go around your arm. Using a dark pen, write the words Home Guard on the fabric. You can use tape or a pin to hold it in place.

To make the patch: write on the patch below your regiment name and unit number. You can think up your own regiment name. For example, if you live in Birmingham, you may decide to be the Birmingham Home Guard Regiment, 1st Platoon. Add any colours or designs to your patch that you would like. Cut out the patch and glue it onto a piece of card. Cut around the patch so the card is the same shape as the patch. Glue a safety pin to the back of the patch.

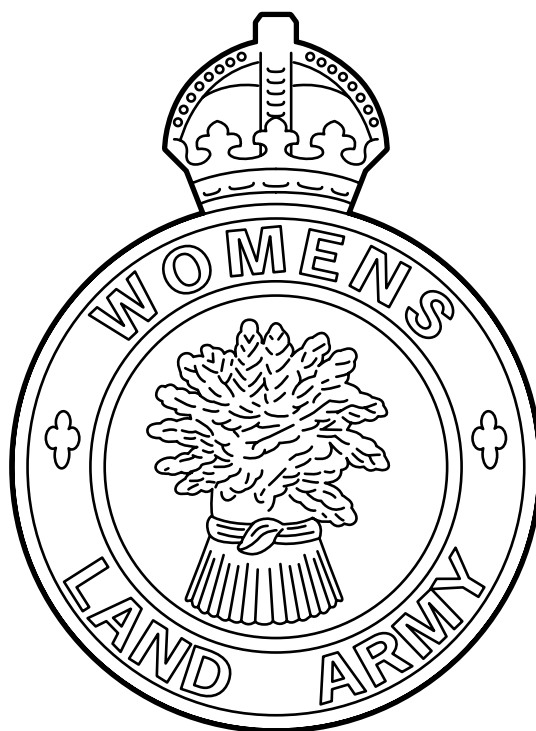


Making uniforms (ii)

Women's Land Army

The Women's Land Army was made up of girls from every walk of life. The idea was that, since there was a shortage of men to work on farms, women would take their place. Women were paid for the work, but it was very difficult. Homesickness was common as many of the girls had never been away from their parents for long periods. The women stayed in private billets on farms or in hostels. The uniform was corduroy breeches, brown leather shoes, bib and brace overalls, long woollen socks, fawn cotton aertex T-shirts, cotton long sleeved fawn shirts, fawn felt hat with a Women's Land Army Badge, dark green tie with WLA letters, rubber boots, a dark green woollen jumper and a long Mackintosh for winter.

To make the patch: Cut out the patch below and glue it onto a piece of card. Cut around the patch so the card is the same shape as the patch. Glue a safety pin to the back of the patch. You may also want to colour in the patch.



Making uniforms (iii)

Fire watcher/Fire Guard

Fire watchers were also called Fire Guards. They wore their own clothing and had an armband with the words Fire Guard or Fire Watcher on it so people would know who they were. Both men and women volunteered for this work. They usually worked one or two nights a week and were not paid. Fire Guards were also given a few buckets of water, a hose and a stirrup pump, which was a type of pump that was worked by pumping with your foot.

To make the armband, cut out a piece of fabric that is 9 cm wide and long enough to go around your arm. Using a dark pen, write the words FIRE GUARD on the fabric. You can use tape or a pin to hold it in place.

**FIRE
GUARD**

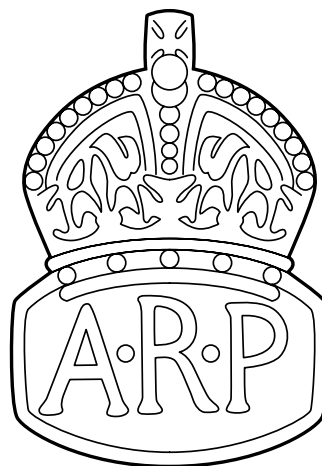
Making uniforms (iv)

Air-Raid Warden/Air-Raid Protection

Each neighbourhood or block of flats had its own air-raid warden. These were always people who lived locally. It was the wardens duty to make sure that every house was observing the blackout rules and to help anyone who needed it. During an air raid, the warden helped people to get into shelters and, if a house was hit, they would help the victims afterwards. This was an unpaid position and men and women both volunteered.

The wardens had no uniforms until May 1941. Instead they wore their own clothes but also had a steel helmet, Wellington boots and an armband.

To make the armband, cut out a piece of fabric that is 9 cm wide and long enough to go around your arm. Cut out the ARP patch here and glue it to your armband. Using a dark pen, write the words air-raid warden on the fabric. You can use tape or a pin to hold it in place.



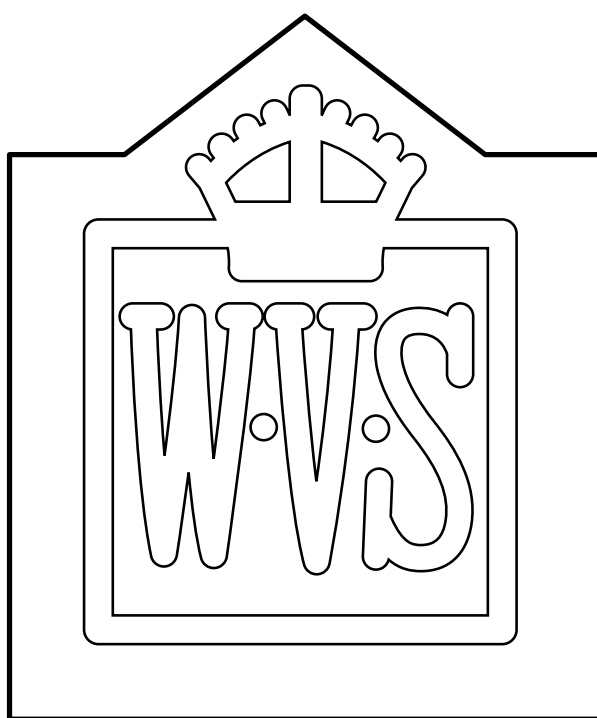
AIR RAID WARDEN

Making uniforms (v)

The Women's Voluntary Service For Air Raid Precaution (WVS). This was set up in June 1938. Initially their main duties were evacuation and making medical supplies, bandages (made from old sheets), nursing gowns and pyjamas. In February 1939 the name was changed to the Women's Voluntary Service for Civil Defence. The type of work included, salvage and old bone collection, harvesting of rosehips, running rest and mobile canteen services, providing temporary accommodation for those people whose homes were destroyed during air raids and organising talks on health issues and on how to 'Make do and mend'. The WVS women also acted as nurses and helped in government offices when they were short of people to file papers and do other work.

The WVS uniform had been designed by the Queen's couturier; it was a bottle green Harris tweed suit, a maroon blouse or jersey and a 'porkpie' hat. For summer, canteen or office work, there was a green overall with a breast pocket monogram. For nursing duty in the sick bay they wore white overalls.

To make the patch: Cut out the patch below and glue it onto a piece of card. Cut around the patch so the card is the same shape as the patch. Glue a safety pin to the back of the patch. You may also want to colour in the patch.



Teacher's sheet

Based on pages 30 and 31 of Children in the Second World War

Making uniforms

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheets on pages 88–92, stiff card, scissors, cloth, pens (including fabric pens), safety pins, glue, needle and thread.

Using the worksheet

During the war, people in the various volunteer forces would have been given simple uniforms. As the war went on, the uniforms sometimes became more detailed and involved. However, in the early years of the war, cloth and other materials were in short supply. So, many of the uniforms for the volunteer forces were very simple.

You may want to use this activity in conjunction with holding a WWII Home Front Day. Students could choose a civilian volunteer force to 'join', make the uniform and then act out the role. For example, some students might choose to 'join' the Women's Land Army. They could make the armband and assemble a uniform out of their own clothes (perhaps wearing brown pants and shirt). They could also use secondary sources to learn more about the Women's Land Army and what they did. On the day, they could describe to the class what life in the WLA was like.

Younger students

Let the students choose a uniform and assemble it. They may need some assistance. Groups of students may want to work together to make several uniforms. Students may also want to assemble a complete uniform, using clothing that they have at home.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Follow instructions to make a simple uniform.
- Understand that there were many volunteer services during WWII.

Older students

Students can use secondary sources to gather more information about the volunteer forces in WWII. They could make up a presentation where they describe a day in the life of a volunteer. They may also want to assemble a complete uniform for their service out of clothing they have at home.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Follow instructions to make a simple uniform.
- Understand that there were many volunteer services during WWII.