

WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR



MUNITIONS FACTORIES

Before the war, approximately **200,000** women were employed in munitions work (the making of explosives and weaponry) in the UK. At the end of 1918, **950,000** women worked in munitions, which meant that in addition to filling men's vacated jobs, these women were working in jobs created directly for them.



ON THE LAND

Approximately **260,000** women volunteered and worked as part of the Land Army to replace male agricultural workers. The work was extremely hard and very poorly paid. The Land Army were responsible for a range of tasks, including milking cows, lambing, ploughing and carrying out farm maintenance work.



IN OFFICES

According to census records, the number of women in the Civil Service increased from **33,000** in 1911 to **102,000** by 1921. During the war itself nearly **200,000** women are shown to have worked in Government departments, performing jobs that were previously carried out by men.

IN UNIFORM



AT THE FRONT (WAAC)

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was officially formed in July 1917. Their job was to carry out work that would free up fighting men for the Front. By the end of the war in 1918, more than **50,000** women had joined the WAAC, some working in war zones in France, Belgium, Italy and Greece.

AT THE DOCKS (WRNS)

The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, known as Wrens) formed in 1917. They carried out roles off ship or when a ship was moored to free up men for frontline operations. At the end of the war, over **5,500** women had been Wrens, **500** of them officers. Josephine Carr was the first Wren to die when her ship was torpedoed.



IN THE AIRBASES (WRAF)

9,000 women transferred to the WRAF (Women's Royal Air Force) when it was formed as part of the RAF (Royal Air Force) in 1918. They served on RAF bases in Britain and then later in 1919 to France and Germany. By the time it was banded in 1920, **32,000** women had served in the WRAF.

IN MILITARY HOSPITALS

Over the course of the war, over **12,000** women were members of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS). Other women nurses were part of the Territorial Force Nursing Service which had at least 8,140 members. Over **90,000** women served as Volunteer Aid Detachments (VADs) in military hospital nursing roles. These services all operated in the UK and close to the Front Lines.



Sources

<http://www.wrens.org.uk/>

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-vital-role-of-women-in-the-first-world-war>

<http://www.qaranc.co.uk/qaimns.php>

http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/womenww1_four.htm

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6652055.shtml>

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/document_packs/women.htm