



## Sadie Hall

Sadie Hall (née Greaves) was born in Leeds and was 15 at the outbreak of war. When her school was closed and evacuated to Lincoln, her parents were unhappy about the thought of her leaving home at such a young age and for a while she stayed at home and helped in the family business. In 1942 Sadie enlisted in the Women's Land Army after discussions with her friend Nora, who also joined. They shared many experiences during their time in the Land Army, including various standards of billets and farms to which they were posted. Initially, Sadie contended with a bout of septicaemia, some harsh working conditions and no hot water or bath facilities in one of her billets. Fortunately, after being transferred to Honiton, Sadie and Nora found a good home with Dr and Mrs Carter. Both girls specialised in pest control, travelling to farms by bicycle and later by van. Once a contract had been arranged between a farm and The Devonshire War Agricultural Committee, Sadie and Nora would eliminate the rats or mice by trapping or gassing. They were extremely competent at their job and their success was reported in a local newspaper. The local area was temporary home to many American servicemen, and Sadie attended local dances as well as the cinema, walking and writing her diary. She also has vivid memories of the troops and armour passing through the town during the build-up to D-Day. In December 1945 Sadie left the Land Army and returned home as her mother was ill. She now lives in Scarborough.



Sadie and Nora out and about in the countryside

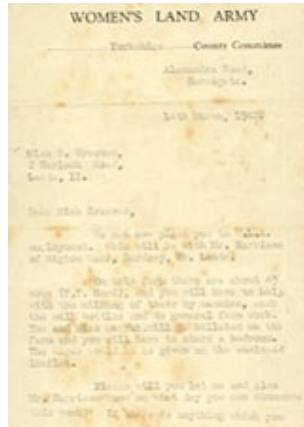
Sadie Hall's material was one of the first sets of documentation relating to the Women's Land Army to come into the Centre. On seeing an article about the Centre in the *Yorkshire Post* which featured Sadie's material, Nora got in touch with the Centre and offered some additional photographs for the archive. We are delighted to preserve material documenting Land Army experience and in particular this friendship between Sadie and Nora which lasted throughout the war and is still strong today. As Sadie herself said in a recent letter to the Centre: "One good thing to come out of the war was all the wonderful friendships which are as strong now as they were during those 4 years. Of course a lot of people's circumstances were quite different - harsh - cruel, and more years, and often overseas. We were the very lucky ones". Despite Sadie and Nora's modesty about their wartime contribution, there is no doubt that their work, often engaged in hard manual labour and sometimes in difficult conditions, was invaluable to the war effort.



Sadie Hall née Greaves, aged 17 - Diary Extract (at home in Leeds)

1941 March

- 12 Siren about 10.30 pm. The 'All Clear' did not sound until 3.30 am. We heard gunfire and bombs - aeroplanes too. Came out of the cellar just before the 'All Clear' and when it sounded took a hot water bottle to bed!
- 13 The alert went at 10.15 pm stayed downstairs until the 'All Clear' went at 1.15 am. We heard guns, bombs and planes in between. I went outside to watch the searchlights. Nothing caught in their beams.
- 14 The Alert went at 9.10 pm. The 'All Clear' did not sound until turned 3.30 am. I have never heard so many planes in my life. For over 3 hrs we heard nothing else but the drone of planes. A bomb whizzed past and landed not so very many yards away in the Park (X Flatts). More fell further up the park - and time bombs. High explosives fell near to Spencers shop. Awful damage done in Holbeck, Hunslet and buildings were also wrecked in town. We saw incendiaries burning on the slope up to the clearings.
- 15 The bomb damage has proved to be worse than at first thought. A girl's head was blown into the next street, near the Spencers. She was a warden leaving the post with a man who was also killed. People stayed up late expecting another raid, however all was quiet.



Letter on Sadie and Nora's placement.



#### TRANSCRIPT OF LETTER ON SADIE AND NORA'S PLACEMENT

Miss S. Greaves,  
2 Harlech Road,  
Leeds, 11.

Dear Miss Greaves,

We can now place you in W.L.A. employment. This will be with Mr. Harrison of Rigton Carr, Bardsey, Nr. Leeds.

On this farm there are about 45 cows (T.T. Herd), and you will have to help with the milking of these by machine, wash the milk bottles and do general farm work. You and Miss Carter will be billeted on the farm and you will have to share a bedroom. The wages would be as given on the enclosed leaflet.

Please will you let me and also Mr. Harrison know on what day you can commence this work? If there is anything which you get to the farm [sic] you should get into touch with Lady Bingley of Bramham Park, Boston Spa, Leeds, as she is the Committee Member for the area.

Your uniform [sic] will be sent direct to the farm.

The enclosed travel leaflet will enable you to claim your travelling expenses to the farm.

Yours faithfully

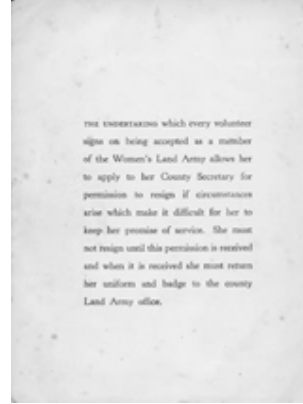
COUNTY SECRETARY



The Second World War Experience Centre  
 Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website  
<http://www.war-experience.org/collections/civilians/alliedbrit/hall/default.asp>



Sadie's W.L.A. membership card



The reverse of the membership card: instructions for resignation if circumstances became difficult.



W.L.A. badge and tie



From left to right: Lilian, Mary, Betty, Sadie, Bessie and Nora break for lunch on their way to another farm (1943/44). The photograph was taken by a convoy of American troops who drew up to a sudden halt on seeing the girls on the grass verge!



Sadie's W.L.A. identity card



A Land Army Christmas card

### Inventory of Sadie's Donation

- Identity card
- W.L.A. membership card
- Photographs
- Copy of diary, from 1940-1945
- Original letters to Sadie from various sources including a repatriated German P.O.W.
- Letters from the W.L.A relating to her call-up, release and uniform concessions
- W.L.A. release certificate, 16 December 1946
- Greeting cards including W.L.A. Christmas card
- Newspapers and magazines
- Theatre programmes
- Miscellaneous cuttings (including pictures and sketches)
- Leaflet, 'Join the Women's Land Army'
- Small elements of uniform including hat-band, arm bands and rat-catcher badge
- W.L.A proficiency badge and certificate in pest destruction
- Certificate from the Queen for exceptional service in the W.L.A from the period 30 March 1942 -14 December 1946
- War-related booklets
- French francs
- Dance invitation, American Red Cross
- Tape-recorded



### Inventory of Nora's Donation

- Photographs
- Pages of manuscript recollections
- Tape-recorded



Nora and Sadie on a few days leave in 1943

Sadie Hall née Greaves, aged 17 - Diary Extract (in Devon)

1944 June

- 4 Chapel in the am. Exeter in the aft. We hitch-hiked both ways.
- 5 Baiting rats in a farmhouse loft at Willend today. I fell through the ceiling into a bedroom below - I was all bumps and bruises and ruined my gold watch strap. An English army officer and wife billeted on the farm occupied the bedroom. The wife not at all pleased! The farmer very concerned for me and very decent about it.
- 6 The invasion of Europe. Now we know why we were awake all through the other night with troops on the move and why the sky was full of Dakota planes and gliders. Why we were banned from working as usual at the airport, and why crowds of British airborne troops passed through - not to mention tanks and landing barges. While out walking one day we were even given a shout and waved at by some Americans who knew us from Tavistock. That was a week or so ago and we didn't realise exactly what was about to happen.



Nora and Sadie on rat-catching duty 1944/45 (Copyright: Western Times D & E Gazette Exeter)

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

**GIRL RAT-CATCHERS**

**W.L.A Members Kill Over 100 In a Day**

For the past seven months Misses Sadie Greaves and Norah Carter, members of the Women's Land Army, have been employed in the unusual occupation of rat-catching in the Tavistock district, and have achieved a large measure of success.

Yesterday they made their biggest 'bag' and when 'tails' were counted it was found that they had captured 43. This number is not the measure of their success, however, for it represents only those which endeavoured to escape from one of the nests which were gassed.

The young women are confident that they must have exterminated over 100 rats during the day.



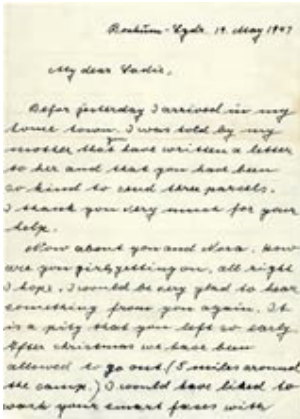
A group photograph of the Devon-based W.L.A girls



Arm bands, a W.L.A. Proficiency badge and Rat-Catchers badge (top left)



TRANSCRIPT OF LETTER TO SADIE FROM HANS ELLENBERGER, 19  
MAY 1947



A letter to Sadie from Hans  
Ellenberger, 19 May 1947

Bochum-Lgdr. 19. May 1947

My dear Sadie,

Before yesterday I arrived in my home town. I was told by my mother that you have written a letter to her and that you have been so kind to send three parcels. I thank you very much for your help.

Now about you and Nora. How are you girls getting on, all right I hope. I would be very glad to hear something from you again. It is a pity that you left so early. After christmas we have been allowed to go out. (5 miles around the camp.) I would have liked to wash your smart faces with some snow. Devon has been covered with snow for three weeks. During that time we had to work once in three weeks. Now you will say lucky boy, but was not, because I didn't get any money at all.

If you ask me whether I am glad to be back or not I can neither say yes nor no. Of course, I am glad to be reunited with my family, it is nice to meet some of my old friends, but I don't like one thing and that is the condition I found Germany I guess it is not necessary to tell you why.

Now I will close for this time and I hope you won't let me wait so long (P.T.O.) So till I hear from you again

Yours

Hans

P.S. My best wishes to Nora and her family and yours, too.

Sadie explains the origin of the letter (above) to Sadie from Hans Ellenberger, 19 May 1947  
(one of a set of five donated to the Centre):

"A very short walk from Bramble Hill was a p.o.w. camp. As we were going out to work in the morning so were they and we passed in opp. Directions. Lilian (one of our girls and half German) suggested we responded by smiling, if only slightly, to their glum faces. We did, and the nicer ones after a few days returned the smiles and before long we actually waved!!

The Americans were very generous in many ways; and often we were given 200 pack boxes of cigarettes and sweets etc from complete strangers who happened to be passing by in a truck. So we thought of a very good use for them!

The black-out hid so much; and having had a quick conversation (in day-light) from the wall top, we arranged with the Germans another quick rendezvous 'under cover'.



So began an occasional hand-over of things to improve their dull lives, including magazines. The wall was high and I had to stretch quite a bit I seem to remember!

After returning home my mother and I managed occasionally to send small parcels to Hans."

### **Transcript of Audio Clip**

Sadie is asked to describe the gin traps that she used:

A bit like a man trap?

Yes, and then there was a metal, what would you call it, handle from it with a chain on, and you used to knock the spoke in to the soil and then you had to camouflage it, so it couldn't be seen and I camouflaged mine once so well and we had long spoons for poison and instead of putting the spoon around when I was going to pick them up, because there wasn't a rat in, (I knew more or less where I had put it), I was moving about with my hands, which I shouldn't have done, it was my own fault because I had been at it for years then and I got my hands in. And I have never forgotten because my friend must have had a perverted sense of humour, she stood there and said, "well, you should know better by now", and I said, "for goodness sake get them out", because it was rather difficult to get down, and fortunately they weren't broken or anything, but they must have gone sort of straight in. But the unfortunate thing was that you did catch owls. We did catch a beautiful Barn Owl once and some people used to catch cats and things and we didn't. I don't, I can't, the only thing I can remember ever catching was an owl and some people who were careless used to kill cats and all sorts, but I can honestly say that we didn't, and after we had left, the old sort of supervisor, old Potter, said that the men had come back from the war and somebody had poisoned a cow, because they'd just. . .

We had, we used to have arsenic, cyanide, because, I mean it's unbelievable now, there was a store in Axminster which had been part of the carpet factory and sugar was stored there, and Nora and I were taken to put (and it was the first time actually we had used cyanide) to put cyanide down, to make sure they were killed and didn't get at these, and it was the most terrible, terrible responsibility and fortunately we were both intelligent and you know, were really, were very very careful and how much we got up again, but things did happen in the war which I am quite sure would never never happen now.

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[Sadie would like us to point out that Potter was a gamekeeper.]