

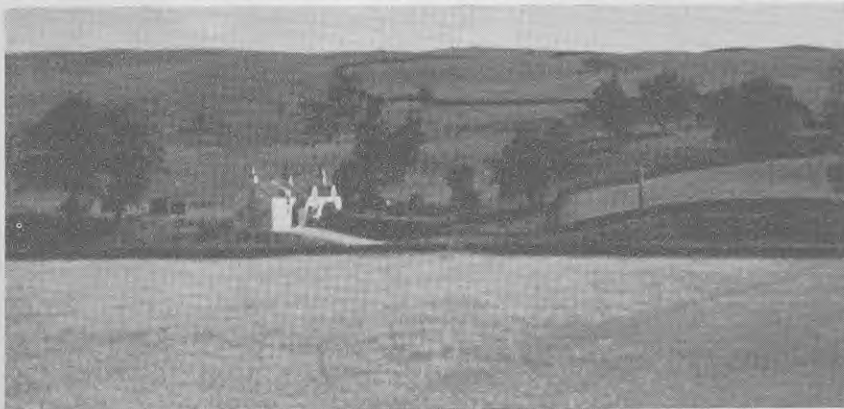
# RURAL DOMESTIC ECONOMY INSTRUCTION IN ENGLAND

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Farming is still a major industry in England, and this Yorkshire farmhouse and its surroundings are reminders of the fact—sometimes forgotten—that stretches of open country still exist.

SOMETIMES forgotten are the facts that farming is still a major industry in England and that women, as farm owners, as employees particularly in dairy and horticultural work, as farm housewives, and as instructors, make an important contribution to primary production. That was so even before the creation of the Women's Land Army during the First World War, but it was, of course, accentuated then and during the Second World War. In the peak year, 1943, there was 1 woman farm worker to 2 men; by 1947 the proportion had dropped to 1 to 5, but 146,000 women were still employed in this way. Country women individually and through their organisations are responsible also for the production and preservation of large quantities of meat from small livestock and of fruit and vegetables.

INSTRUCTION in rural domestic economy grew out of the Agricultural Advisory Service, which employed a number of women instructors, chiefly for work in dairy farming, horticulture, and poultry keeping. As they visited farms these women were frequently asked by housewives if they could explain why bottled fruit had gone bad, what to do with surplus fruit and vegetables, or how to make the best use of the meat when a pig was killed. From those experiences it became clear that there was a place for a separate instructional service, staffed by women, and directed toward assisting rural women with their special problems.

## Development of Service

The nucleus of the new service was formed from the women already in agricultural advisory work who had become interested in the domestic aspects and from others with domestic-science training and an appreciation of country life and its problems. As food conservation and preservation have always been the subjects most emphasised, special short and intensive courses in fruit preservation, domestic buttermaking and cheesemaking, and bacon curing were usually attended by instructors to supplement previous training.

The Ministry of Agriculture research station at Long Ashton has done much to develop safe and standardised methods of food preservation. Their bulletin "The Domestic Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables," giving the scientific principles underlying methods of preservation as well as tested recipes and techniques, and frequently revised to incorporate the latest findings, is very valuable to housewives and teachers. "Dig for Victory" and "Grow More" bulletins and leaflets, brief, simple, and each dealing with only one subject, were distributed extensively during the war.

A reorganisation of agricultural advisory work in 1946 was aimed at equalising funds and facilities available in different counties and co-ordinating the work with other educational services.

## Training Courses

The two new training schools are at Worcester and Writtle. The Worcester property has a 30-acre farmlet and modern buildings, but the demonstration kitchen is in the original farmhouse, so students learn foods work



Well-tended land where men have worked for centuries.