

WOMEN ARE

IN AGRICULTURE



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Preface

We were members of the 1982 Kellogg Rural Leadership Course. A requirement of the course was the completion of a project. We combined our energies, skills and resources to search out, interview and then portray women in non-traditional rural occupations.

Our aim has been to encourage girls to consider all types of work - to lift their sights beyond the stereotypes. Our primary concern has been to get our message across to the girls themselves. We are aware though of the important influence of parents, careers advisers and other teachers. Accordingly we have also written with them in mind.

Initially we interviewed and wrote up our "pen portraits" on 12 young women. Six of these have or are being published in a series produced by the Vocational Training Council and the Society for Research on Women.

This publication brings together all 12 studies. It is our hope that girls looking for careers in rurally related occupations will find in them good guidance, inspiration and courage to be different!

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- * Rural Development & Extension Centre, Lincoln College - whose staff share our belief in the importance of the message we want to give to the girls and who therefore undertook the work of publishing this booklet.

Isla McFadden,
"The Acheron",
CHEVIOT

Robyn Grigg,
Hickory Bay,
AKAROA

THE YOUNG WOMEN WE INTERVIEWED

Colleen Strang	...	...	...	Stock Agent
Sarah Clark	...	...	...	Rural Journalist
Jenny Cox	...	...	...	Farm Advisory Officer
Anna Cooper	...	...	...	Rural Secretary
Rachel Prouting	...	...	...	Tutor in Agricultural Studies
Tina Collier	...	...	...	Forester
Jo McIntosh	...	...	...	Herd Recording Officer
Rebecca Morrison	...	...	...	Rural Landscape Architect
Neroli Bruce	...	...	...	Woolsorter
Belinda Bach	...	...	...	Veterinarian
Kate Shield	...	...	...	Farm Advisory Officer
Mary Watson	...	...	...	Shearing Contractor

**Colleen Strang
Stock Agent**

Colleen Strang Stock Agent

Before becoming a stock agent, twenty-two year old Colleen Strang studied for a Diploma in Agriculture at Lincoln College.

"I'd often thought I would love to work in a stock firm, but thought it probably wasn't feasible. I have always enjoyed being outside, I love horseriding and swimming and play a lot of netball. I was really keen on swimming and represented my province at netball and riding too."

What gave you the idea of going to Lincoln College?

"Quite by chance I was talking to a friend who was doing the Diploma in Agriculture, and I thought it sounded an interesting course. I also realised that I didn't need U.E., and I could see it leading to a job related to farming."

Where did you do the necessary practical work for the course?

"For my practical, I worked as a general farm-hand on a sheep run in Central Otago. It was a very good farm, totally different from the Southland farms I had worked on. I was expected to do everything, including fencing. For mustering we were often dropped off by helicopter on the Old Man Range well before sunrise. I did a lot of mustering, and the boss's dogs worked for me if I needed them. It was all tremendous experience and I just loved Central Otago."

How did you feel when you had been accepted for Lincoln College?

"I knew I would have to scrimp and save. I even sold my car and waitressed at night to get there. I flattered with six others, we were all doing different degrees. I really loved the place and I made lots of friends.

"Each diploma class was split into tutorials. On the first day we had to stand up and say what we wanted to be, and I said I wanted to be a stock agent. All the boys roared with laughter. Well, damn them, I thought, I WILL be a stock agent!

"I knew I had given up a lot and worked really hard. I got nearly all A's and it was the first time I had shone academically - Mum and Dad didn't know I had it in me. I did well in all subjects, except engineering, which I just scraped through. I wasn't really interested, and didn't much want to know about laying concrete or taking carburettors apart! I got a great deal out of the course."

Colleen was really pleased she had done sixth form accounting, as she found it helped with the farm management budgets. She had also passed English, geography, history, maths, science and biology for School Certificate. After graduating from Lincoln College she went in search of a job with a stock and station firm.

"I went round all the stock firms in the region asking for a job, and I was offered one in a woolstore, but I turned it down as I didn't want to be inside. Then I saw this job advertised, applied for it and had a marvellous two-hour interview. They were willing to give me a go on my qualifications, though they were a bit doubtful because I was a woman. It was definitely a help having a Diploma in Agriculture. I don't think they would have even interviewed me without it."

When did you start your new job?

"Two weeks before Christmas, I only spent about four days

on the road with the previous agent before he finished. Looking back, I was really thrown in at the deep end, but it was good for me. The ewe fair season was coming up and I was able to watch the other agents. I took to drafting easily. I work with five other agents, one in town and four others out on the rural beat. We each have a definite area and I would probably have about ninety-five clients altogether."

Colleen describes a typical week during the summer.

"I'm usually drafting Sunday and Monday. Tuesday is the weekly stock fair with perhaps more drafting in the afternoon. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I'm available to do specific jobs for clients. This often involves taking them out to look at store stock, or arranging private sales. For instance, yesterday, I sold a client's cattle privately. Another day, I might take a client to buy rams. The big annual ewe fair days in February start at 4.00 a.m., and are very hectic, exhausting, but exciting too."

Is there anything you don't particularly like about your job?

"The worst part of the job is the telephone. In the summer I'm on the phone for at least an hour at night, often three or four hours. The phone is a real tie.

"There is a lot of personal responsibility in this job. You must keep seeing and looking after your clients. It's important to be able to talk sport, especially rugby, and the weather - I even find myself talking about the weather to Mum and Dad at times! At first I wrote details of clients on cards, such as 'has asthmatic son and dog called Dan'. It does help if you can walk in and remember names and details. I have got to know a lot of clients socially and now I'm often asked to things like twenty-firsts and woolshed parties."

How do farmers react to a woman stock agent?

"They are surprised to find a female at the door, then you introduce yourself as a stock agent and that really takes the wind out of their sails. They often ask, 'Do you come off a farm?' No my father's a baker! I was the first woman stock agent in the area, and had quite a few write-ups in the local papers. A sort of 'centrefold in the Press', plus firm's tie, leggings and chalk!"

Did you require any other training to become a stock agent?

"I was sent by my firm to a business management course run by the Institute of Management. I got a lot out of this very intensive two-day course. Later, I went to one run especially for stock agents at Lincoln College. It very briefly covered a lot of the subjects I'd done at Lincoln. Really, the Diploma in Agriculture is a great background for a stock agent to have."

We asked Colleen about the future.

"My present job is a very good grounding even if I don't stay in the stock agency business. For instance, I love working with wool, especially fine wool, and I could possibly go into woolclassing at some time. Last year, I wrote up all the local netball reports, and it was suggested I do some freelance writing. Eventually, I would very much like to become involved in agricultural journalism. At the moment I am learning about all aspects of farming and this will give me a good background.

"It can be hard for females to break in to the business. Then when I was first in the job I was rather on a pedestal - now I'm the same as everyone else, a stock agent. I do everything the others do, crutching the sheep on the firm's farmlet, for example. But I enjoy being in skirts as much as overalls!

"If other women want an outside job, I'd really encourage them to become stock agents."

Sarah Clark
Rural Journalist

Sarah Clark

Rural Journalist

What is it like being a journalist for rural radio?

"Most reactions to me are really good. A few farmers look sideways, but a lot come up and say 'Oh you're the little girl from Rural Radio, we enjoy listening to you'. I have had to work hard, not because I'm a woman, but because I didn't have an agricultural background."

A diminutive, but very lively Sarah Clark, aged twenty-five, has an obvious enthusiasm for life and her work in particular. We asked how, as a city girl, she became a rural broadcasting officer.

"Right from the start of the sixth form year, I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and really worked towards becoming a radio journalist. At that stage I was 'top-streamed' to go on to university, and ran into problems because the teaching staff didn't want me to go to a technical institute. I wanted to be a journalist, and I felt the only way to be one was to get out and do it. I couldn't see any point in waiting and certainly didn't want to spend time at varsity if I didn't really have to."

After her acceptance at the School of Journalism, to do a one year diploma course, Sarah began to learn what it was all about.

"They teach you what is news, how to write a news story, and shorthand and typing. I was particularly interested in reporting news. I had no doubts about going into radio, I had been attracted to it right from the start. I love the immediacy of it - the delight of radio."

What were your interests at school?

"I always had a flair for English and read widely as child. I was a real old bookworm and my father and I often read the same books. I worked in the library at school, which was really great being such an avid reader. I was also very involved in gymnastics, competing at provincial level, and later coaching, and judging competitions at a national level."

After graduating at the age of eighteen, Sarah worked as a reporter for Radio Windy. Private radio stations were just starting to make their presence felt.

"We worked six days a week just to 'beat Radio New Zealand'. The public were tremendous, as they fed a lot of news to community radio. You had to work by instinct and cope with a few crank calls. I worked at Radio Windy for three years. We were short staffed at the time so I had a wide range of experience. At nineteen I was accredited to Parliament, probably because I was known as 'an accurate and well presented reporter'. I believe first impressions are important. We refer to ourselves as journalists, the public call us reporters.

Later, married and living in Invercargill, Sarah worked for eighteen months for Radio NZ as a news journalist. A trip overseas followed and after travelling widely, Sarah and Pete arrived back ready to settle down.

"My parents were in Whangarei and Pete's mother in Invercargill, so we decided somewhere in the middle would do! We looked for jobs in Christchurch and I knocked on Radio NZ's door. I applied for the newsroom but there was nothing, although they said, they did have a vacancy for a reporter for rural radio. I thought to myself, I don't know anything about 'rurals', apart from knowing one end of a cow from the other! However, I took the job

considering it a stage back to the newsroom, telling them that a lack of rural background experience wasn't a hindrance in any way! [Actually, I was concerned that I didn't have the background, but didn't say so.] I would never go back to straight news now. I just love the agricultural scene, but I still don't own a pair of gumboots!"

How did you learn the technical side of your work?

"You soon learn all the technology on the job. There is the same basic panel with a few differences at each station. You do have disasters with some interviews though, and you need a technician to help 'unscramble' the tape."

Where do you get most of your ideas and material from?

"Very little information comes to you automatically. People are so interested in what others are doing but it doesn't always occur to them to let me know, so that I can pass it on. I like to know the reason behind why, say, a particular seminar is being held. Just spending time talking to people often gives something, and people are my best source of ideas. Talking to them, they say 'you should go and see so and so down the road'. Ideas can come from comments made in passing. It's my choice who I go and see. I have a diary and reminder file which is full of ideas and I like to follow things right through, even if it's some time later. I feed a large amount of material to the mid-day Rural Report."

Sarah covers an area from Kaikoura to South Canterbury and over to the West Coast. We asked her if she had any particular likes or dislikes about the job.

"There is nothing that I really don't like. My biggest frustration is lack of time. I just s-t-r-e-t-c-h the day to fit. I used to do live recordings which meant a 6.00 a.m. start, now I record programmes and have an 8.00 a.m. start. I'm paid a salary and tend to have a certain work pattern during the week. For instance, I'm in Ashburton on Wednesday, and Friday is spent recording programmes in the office here. I suppose I would average at least two interviews a day. Driving time takes a big lump out of the day, anything up to two hours. That's when I do my thinking.

"Pete is tremendous, 'hang in there Sarah', he says. I couldn't cope with the long hours without his support and understanding. I've worked damn hard on this job, I think they are very pleased, the results are beginning to show with the number of my interviews on Rural Report."

We asked about the other rural broadcasting officers.

"There are twenty RBO's and four of us are women. It's a very isolated job as all the others are scattered throughout New Zealand. We have a phone conference call each morning, it's really so that Rural Report know what we are sending up for the day. I may, or may not, have something specific to contribute."

What other opportunities are there for rural journalists?

"Once you open the first door, so many others open that you weren't aware of before. There are opportunities for more women as feature writers with farming journals, or perhaps as public relations officers, especially with the producer boards, dairy and freezing companies. There is no reason why a woman couldn't take up one of these positions."

Do you have time for anything else?

"Oh, yes, we are building a house and doing some of it ourselves. I sew and enjoy cooking, and have a mass of recipe books. Pete and I are doing accounting at night school. It's basic accounting for non-accountants! My social life is rather terrible, as I find myself chatting to someone, and then the chat becomes an interview! I'm not naturally a forceful person. In fact, I prefer to be low key. I have had to become authoritative in manner though, as you must be in control when the microphone is on."

How do you think your listeners see you?

"I don't want to become a radio personality, there is nothing special about me. The big secret is credibility. I never try to pretend if I don't know, and I ask straight out when in doubt. I'm sure people don't turn on the radio to hear me. They want to hear what others have to say. People like to hear about other people - not things and machinery - and I enjoy being a part of it all."

Jenny Cox
Farm Advisory Officer

Jenny Cox Farm Advisory Officer

"I really didn't know what I wanted to do. At school, we hadn't been encouraged to look at a wide variety of careers, though we did learn self-confidence with debating, public speaking and so on. It was a really a toss-up whether to do a music or science degree. I eventually decided that a career in music could only lead to teaching, and I didn't want to teach, so I gave it away. So science and agriculture filled the bill and Lincoln College appealed because of its smallness. I liked the idea of agricultural science because of the wide variety of career options at the end."

Although Jenny was brought up in the city, she had many contacts with the rural scene through family relations.

"Dad was perhaps a little surprised at my choice of an agricultural science degree, but I had tremendous support from my parents. It's important for any girl to have support right through. I was never forced, always encouraged, and my family were right behind me."

Jenny had always been involved in sports like netball, swimming, and tennis, and in the holidays went tramping and skiing. She really looked forward to the opportunity of working on farms for her pre-Lincoln practical experience.

One hundred and fifty cows to milk

"I spent three months on a dairy farm in Hawkes Bay for part of my practical. It was my first farm experience and quite something. Within two weeks I was left with 150 cows

to milk and the farm to look after while the owners went for a holiday! The second summer I worked on an uncle's property in Southland. It was a mixed cropping and sheep farm in a small community full of Southland hospitality. The farming experience was good. There were no problems with the physical aspects, and I was able to share the work load with the owner's sons. Altogether, forty-four weeks of practical are required.

"At Lincoln, to do my agricultural science degree, I lived in for the first year. I made lots of friends and I certainly have many contacts now in the agricultural scene."

Jenny spent the third year of her degree as an exchange student at Oregon State University. This is a special scheme organised between the two universities.

"During the holidays in Oregon, I went haymaking on a large ranch. I was the only girl in a crew of about thirty. The boss was a bit nervous about taking me on because of all the machinery, as we had to service it all ourselves. At the end, he said, 'You girls really do know how to treat machinery, don't you.' He was very pleased."

Back at Lincoln College at the beginning of her fourth year, Jenny decided she would like to be involved in advisory work.

"At Oregon I had quite a bit of contact with Extension Officers, they're much the same as our Farm Advisory Officers. I thought it looked pretty interesting work, and I realised I enjoyed working with people too."

Jenny was enthusiastic about the fourth year farm management subjects.

"I saw farming all coming together. I took the soil and water engineering and watershed management options. I did both subjects, because if I didn't do farm advisory

work, there would possibly be openings in the Catchment Boards. I had no qualms about what I was doing and no problems as a woman doing the degree. I only hit the problems and differences after I left Lincoln and was out in the real world!"

Her own district: hills and sheep

After putting in her application, Jenny was accepted as a Farm Advisory Trainee Officer based in a provincial town. She was there for eight months before being moved to a small rural town servicing a hill country district.

"As a trainee, I found some of the attitudes of the office staff towards a woman in my job a bit hard to take. You must have confidence in yourself and you have to put yourself above the comments. I looked forward to having my own district and I wanted to come south to some hills and sheep. They sent me to this area and it suits me down to the ground. I'm now right into it and I love it. Some of the farmers have taken a while to get used to me, but it's okay once they get to know you.

"We run a lot of field days and have just started a discussion group. It's the first one that MAF - the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries - has set up in this area. The discussion group days are held on a different farm each time. I find I have to do a lot of the organising. Before the day itself, the farmer and I get together a programme for discussion. I like to have a walk over his farm beforehand so I can go along with something well prepared for the session. I really want to see these guys move and I get great support from my boss in the office here."

One of the things Jenny really appreciates about the Farm Advisory Services Division is the tremendous backup system available.

"There are specialists in everything, and they are available if necessary for field days, etc. I see my role as an educating one. As far as budgets go, I'm happy to do them once or twice but not permanently. I get a lot of satisfaction out of field days. It's a sort of mass education. It's a good way to meet a lot of the farmers too, and it's great if someone comes back and says they've tried something and it works."

Is the ability to get on with people important?

"Yes, very definitely. I'm also involved as District Secretary to the Young Farmers' Club. There are four Clubs in the District and I find it's a good social organisation as well. It's sometimes difficult to get away from the job in a small town. If you go for a drink in a pub there's always someone there who wants an answer!"

And what about the future?

"I want to stay in farm advisory work as I'm not interested in moving sideways into agricultural administration. I will certainly stay with MAF for at least three years. Then I would like to go on a UK exchange or take a year's leave. There is always the possibility of private consultancy work. I see openings for other women in farm advisory work - it's a great career."

**Anna Cooper
Rural Secretary**

Anna Cooper Rural Secretary

On hearing that Lincoln College was planning a Rural Secretarial course, Anna then a fifth form student, thought -

"That's exactly what I want to do. I was at high school, and was taking all the subjects relevant to the secretarial course, like English, typing, economics, biology and maths.

"My sixth form year was an extremely busy one. I was on five committees altogether, but the cafeteria committee is the one that really comes to mind. The economics teacher and I set up the new school cafeteria. It was a tremendous foundation for my work now. The responsibility was all mine, and it was a great experience. We put in all the equipment - the fridge, tables, chairs and stocked up with groceries. I had the responsibility of setting something up, seeing it through, and seeing the success of it, all in one year."

As a child, Anna was very involved on the home farm.

"Lambing was always set for the August holidays. Christmas was always harvest time, so there was no need for employed labour if we were around! We were just thrown into everything, all aspects of farming - trucks, tractors and stock - the lot."

On leaving school, Anna discovered that Lincoln College had not yet finalised the Rural Secretarial course, but she was not put off.

"I constantly rang the College to find out when the course was starting. In the meantime I worked for the city council as an office junior. I learnt a lot, and realised just what it was like to be dealing with the public."

When accepted for the Diploma in Rural Secretarial Practice, Anna set out to do her practical.

"I worked on the home farm as it was right in the middle of harvesting. The course is essentially for two years - one year of general office experience, and one year full-time at Lincoln. If necessary, a Technical Institute course can be taken to cover shorthand and typing skills.

"I lived in the Halls of Residence, very important this. If you travel out each day you never get the true 'Lincoln' feeling. It's great to live on campus."

The course provides for options in farming or horticulture and covers such aspects as office practice, accounting, farm finance, animal and plant science, pastures and animal husbandry. It gives openings for a variety of jobs - farm secretaries, positions with mercantile firms, farm accountants and consultants, and freezing companies etc.

While at Lincoln, Anna made many friends. One of them remarked that his father's farm accounts were in a terrible mess and asked Anna if she would be interested in reorganising them.

"During the August holidays I sorted out the chaos! I liked the area where they lived, and wondered if I could set up business on my own. I had a look around and telephoned a number of people to sound out the job possibilities."

After finishing her Diploma, Anna headed south again in December.

"The chap from MAF - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries - was extremely helpful, he could see how great it would be to have a secretarial service and gave me the names of

about fifty people to approach. I typed letters, posted them, then rang the people up after a week or so and discussed with them the possibilities of employing a farm secretary. By Christmas time I had five or six definite clients. Two months later I had settled here permanently. I love the crisp, clear winters, and I find the people very friendly. There is plenty of potential and interest for me, as there is a lot of hill country development. It's all very different from the flats of home."

Budgeting - and helping farmers' progress.

"With very expensive development costs it is sometimes several years before a farmer sees any returns. A farmer's yearly income is like a rollercoaster - up and down. I can help him to level out his taxable income. There is a lot of personal satisfaction in working out cash flow budgets and seeing farmers really making progress. The financial worry is far less because they know the situation. I like to think that I have been some help."

Anna lives in a small rural township because she wants to be handy to her clients "so they can then pop in and see me" and is conscious that if she lived in the city, her mileage bill might be higher than her labour input.

"I now have twenty-five clients that I see every month. I spend an average of three hours a month on each client's books, doing such things as checking and paying accounts, writing out cheques, claiming petrol rebates, drawing out wages.

"The most important and essential part of the job is the cash flow for which I do both forecast and monthly budgets. I record all cheques, any automatic payments, analyse accounts and income - every cent in and out of the farm is recorded. I do forecast budgets for about half of my clients at this time of the year. Sometimes I'm called

in for a specific reason, perhaps to prepare statements for bank loans or a special project."

Anna would like to build up her business to about thirty-five clients. In the meantime she has several other part-time jobs.

"I work for a stock firm for three hours a day. It gives me the opportunity to see what new products are coming on the market and means I'm meeting farmers all the time. I'm involved for three or four months of the year doing a wheat survey for Lincoln College. I can slot this in at less busy times of the month from February until May. I travel through Canterbury and Southland and spend a week in the North Island. I was also involved in establishing the local paper. It is printed fortnightly and I'm now the editor."

The concept of a rural secretary is relatively new. How do you cope with this and what reactions do you meet with?

"To begin with I definitely got the feeling that they were saying 'the secretary bird is coming today'! It is important that my work is kept confidential. I find the work very interesting because each client's situation is different. I love driving but I'm a little bugged by so much time wasted on the road. I usually leave home between 7.30 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. and I'm mostly back by six at night."

What sort of person do you need to be?

You need to be outgoing and positive to set out on your own and move into a new area. Looking back, it was a tremendous struggle to begin with. I felt right about what I was doing and gave it all I had. I knew I could do it and here I am, aged twenty-one, and running my own business."

**Rachel Prouting
Tutor in
Agricultural Studies**

Rachel Prouting Tutor in Agricultural Studies

Rachel had always had close ties with the land. She was brought up on a mixed cropping farm, and now at twenty-four, is a tutor for the Diploma in Agriculture Studies at Lincoln College.

"As a child I loved being outside. I hated having to be inside all day at school. When at home I spent all my time outside, either horse riding, helping my father, or doing different projects around home. I was also involved with the local Cub Group. I helped to fatten pigs, reared anything up to sixty calves and during the holidays went potato picking."

At secondary school, Rachel really enjoyed the sciences and maths and thought she would like to do something with animals.

"Going to Lincoln College was a sort of childhood dream but I had no particular encouragement from my teachers to go. One teacher told me I was stupid thinking of going to Lincoln and would be wasting my time, as it was a man's world out there! But I took no notice as I knew that Lincoln was where I wanted to go. I had thought of going to Vet School. However, a liaison group from the College visited us at school and I was really inspired."

Rachel enrolled to do a Diploma in Agriculture, followed by a Diploma in Field Technology. This required two years practical work.

"I spent the first year at home on my parents farm and worked one day a week at a market garden. This was a particularly valuable experience. The second year I worked

on a North Canterbury sheep farm - actually I got this job through a stock firm contact. I enjoyed the physical involvement on the farm as I was very fit from potato picking. I got the feeling from my workmate that I had to prove myself on the farm, but I didn't feel I had to prove anything to anybody. The farm owner was older and had many helpful labour saving devices."

On completing her Diploma, Rachel considered a number of occupations.

"I thought about doing research work, or being a field officer. Through Lincoln I got a job for three months at Tara Hills Research Station. After that I decided I was not too keen on animal research. I was there during the summer and lived in a shearer's hut. Fabulous, as it's such a lovely area.

"I wish I had studied for an advanced Diploma in Farm Management, but I was advised to enrol for Field Technology as there are more openings for women. I really wish I HAD taken the Farm Management option as I believe there ARE openings for women in this area now."

What did you do when you finished at the Research Station?

"I was offered a casual job working with DYC on the peppermint crop. After three months I was offered a full-time position with the firm. It was a tremendous responsibility, I was really thrown in at the deep end. I was involved in visiting the farmers and advising them at all stages of the crop - when and where to plant, and the care of the crop etc. I cut samples of fresh material from the field, took them back to the lab for analysis as to the right time to harvest, and I also organised the harvesting itself. The production of peppermint oil is a fascinating process.

"I was concerned initially as to whether I would be

accepted by farmers, and I felt there was a barrier because I was young and a female. The majority seemed rather reluctant at first. However, I developed a very good working relationship with all my farming clients. The children used to see me coming and say 'here comes the Peppermint Lady'."

With the folding up of the peppermint industry, Rachel at twenty-three, was looking for another career in agriculture.

"Who will want to employ me I thought. I saw the position of Teaching Assistant at Lincoln College advertised and applied. I had an interview and got the job. It was a new position created to help with the Agricultural Diploma classes. I was to be involved in evaluating the course and teaching methods. Eighty percent of the students became farm managers, farm workers or farmers. Their future needs must be catered for. I encouraged the use of smaller groups so students would be required to think more, become involved and interact more. It was decided more tutors would be required to take smaller problem solving groups, and I was transferred to become a tutor. There is a great need for students to acquire a high standard of communication skills. I know I lacked these when I graduated, and I want to help improve on this aspect for others."

Rachel has an obvious enthusiasm for her work and a very genuine interest in her students.

"Some technical lectures are taken out in the field, say for feed budgeting, purchasing rams etc. I find my earlier sheep farming experience very valuable. I'm very involved on a personal level with the students and their welfare. I enjoy working with them and get to know many of them very well. Your attitude towards them is all important and I guess being about the same age level makes it easier."

We asked Rachel what it is like working at an agricultural college?

"Being involved with subjects I enjoy I'm constantly able to learn more myself. To me the best way of learning is by teaching, and being at a university, you are in a learning environment. There are seminars on once or twice a week, and I find it all very stimulating. There is the disadvantage of having to work through channels and red tape of an institution. I notice it, especially after working in a private enterprise atmosphere."

In the future, Rachel sees the possibility of doing another agricultural course.

"I love farm management as a subject and will always want to know more. However, we may move further out into the country. My husband is an agricultural contractor and we are both keen to go farming."

Rachel frequently takes part in career discussions at secondary schools.

"I see excellent openings for women on the staff of agricultural colleges. The bias has almost gone about employing women, and people are now being selected on all their qualifications. The more women the better, for a better balance all round."

**Tina Collier
Forester**

Tina Collier Forester

"Both my parents are involved in the plant sciences, and as a family we spent a lot of time in the countryside. I was very keen on the outdoors, particularly the mountains. We went tramping as a family in areas like Arthur's Pass. My parents were always 'botanising' and I soon started tagging behind with them. They taught me a great deal about the plants of the high country." - Tina Collier explains how childhood influences led to her present career as a forester with the New Zealand Forest Service.

"In the sixth and seventh forms, I did a science course - biology, chemistry, physics, English and maths. I had a particularly good and enthusiastic maths teacher."

On leaving school, Tina decided to go overseas and worked at Arthur's Pass to earn enough money.

"My father was attending an agricultural conference in Russia so I started off overseas with him. I was very involved with Guiding at the time and went as a New Zealand representative to a big jubilee camp in England and later on worked in the girl guide chalet in Switzerland for two months. I loved living in the mountains."

And when you returned to New Zealand, you began to think about a career?

"I realised to get a job which would satisfy me, I needed a tertiary education. I had originally felt that going to university was not a means to an end - so many girls from school had drifted into varsity life not really

knowing what to. I came back determined to gain a qualification and began a Bachelor of Science in Botany and Maths.

"Botany really interested me, but I didn't want to drift into teaching or become a technician, so I went to the School of Forestry and asked if I could join in on forest ecology classes. 'Not possible' they said, telling me that if I was really interested in high country management and forest ecology, I should do the whole course, and then I would have a far better understanding of land management and forestry as a whole. Luckily, the units I had taken in the first year of my Bachelor of Science were also the prerequisites for Forestry School.

"I then decided to complete a Bachelor of Forestry degree which is two years of sciences and two years of the School of Forestry. Three girls had graduated before me and in my year there were five of us. We rather took the class by storm, although we were very much accepted as 'one of the blokes'! I really enjoyed the field work. It was a great two years and we all got on really well. We had common interests in forestry and plant ecology and a love of the outdoors."

Forestry surveys - 60lb pack, plus guitar.

As part of her degree, Tina was required to do a certain amount of practical work.

"During summer vacations I did forestry survey work. This meant going into native forests and assessing them in terms of their vegetation, composition and their animal and bird populations. To me, they were tremendous holiday jobs. We were based under canvas or in huts. Until then the Forest Service had never employed women on survey work. It was hard work sometimes carrying a sixty pound pack and assessing vegetation on a transit

line straight up the hill. We did our part carrying loads around, plus the guitar, from hut to hut. It's certainly a very good way of getting to know people, working and living with each other twenty-four hours a day."

Tina gained her Bachelor of Forestry Degree, with Honours.

"When I finished my degree I was very determined to get a job with the New Zealand Forest Service, but when I first approached them, there weren't many jobs around. I wanted a job and felt I had something to give, but all to no consequence.

"For the summer I did some temporary survey work. I decided nothing would 'just happen', so I wrote to head office and asked for another interview. When I talked to the Director of Production Management, he realised I was very keen to make a career in forestry."

When finally appointed to the staff of the Forest Service, Tina filled in for two foresters who had just left.

"I was thrown in at the deep end and found it a tremendous challenge. I had the advantage of a good knowledge of the Canterbury Conservancy which was a great help. At the moment I'm working principally in environmental forestry, with responsibility for recreation, soil and water protection, animal control and vegetation surveys.

"When I came here I felt very strongly that although we were managing the forests for the people we were not doing enough to tell them all about it. I became very keen about publicity and the production of brochures for forested areas. I wanted the public to understand the beech forests and the whole mountain environment. It's important to make people aware that the walking tracks are there to be used."

We asked Tina about the work she does with management plans.

"There is a lot of work involved in them. We write a description of each forest, outlining the proposed work for soil and water control, fire and animal control and recreation. I find my science subject and English very important. In any job English is required for good communication and well written reports.

A blend of field and office work.

"We do most of the field work during the summer, usually with a group of students. I really enjoy going back to assess the trial work in the autumn, taking plot photographs and checking on all the experimental plots. I would like to be able to do more outside work, but it's not possible during the winter. I really enjoy my job because of the blend of field and office work."

And how do you see your future?

"Forestry is an excellent degree but there is still a lot I want to learn about. I guess I'm the sort of person who will always want to be learning. At the moment, I'm doing extension studies in subjects like the weather, the climate, and anthropology, and I've just finished a basic computer course. I have a great love for wood; I enjoy woodturning and now own my own lathe.

"I would like to do more in production forestry. It would give me a broader experience in things like silviculture. That is, tending trees and checking their height, age, diameter, and suitability for a particular use.

"I like to have as interesting a job as possible. A forestry degree is really a broad land-management degree, and can lead into research or catchment board work. I could look at town and country planning, nursery, or

forestry consultancy work. Forestry is expanding and promises many more openings in environmental, recreational, and production planning.

"My own interests are in protection forestry in the high country, and farm forestry. I love my job!"

Jo McIntosh
Herd Recording Officer

Jo McIntosh

Herd Recording Officer

Jo McIntosh has worked as a herd recording officer for over 14 years and still loves her job. The main object of her job is to identify for the farmer which are his best cows.

"By using the butterfat test the farmer can identify his top producing cows. He then knows from which cows to breed his replacement heifers. It really pays him to test. The town supply farmer is mainly concerned with quantity, whereas, a factory supplier is paid on both quantity and quality."

Life is organised around the visits to her dairy farmers.

"I visit most farms once a month, some alternate months, and a few test twice a year, really just to rank the cows. To me, monthly testing is the only way to go, as cows are then given a ranking over the twelve month period.

"I stay at a different farm every night. I arrive in the afternoon and set up my gear. There's usually time for a cup of tea and a game on the floor with the kids before going out to the shed.

"At the evening milking each cow's milk is weighed, and sampled through the milk meter. Each sample is put into a numbered bottle. At the end of milking, it is time to clean up my gear before tea. I'm up early next morning and out to the shed to go through the same process again. After breakfast I test the milk. One copy of the records is left with the farmer, and the other is sent to the Livestock Improvement Association's Office."

Jo can't really pinpoint too far ahead where she will be at a certain time.

"It's a question of getting to know your area, and approximately when you will be there. I ring the farmer the night before to let him know I'm coming. The round can be organised a little to suit yourself. I often work through the weekends and have time off at the end of the month. My wages are based on a flat rate on the number of herds, with a bonus system on cows above that flat rate. Altogether, I cover about twenty-two herds a month."

We asked Jo if there were any disadvantages in her job.

"Not really, manure you accept, well cow messes and all that. If you get cooked a beauty, you get cooked a beauty! Women have always been involved in the dairy industry and are readily accepted as herd recording officers. In the South Island most of HRO's are women, but I think it's different in the North Island."

What about your other interests?

"I have a lot of interest in the work I am doing. A great percentage of the farmers are pedigree breeders and I have become very involved in pedigree stock myself. It makes the job even more interesting following certain cows through to A & P Shows, Sales etc. I'm a steward at several shows and a member of the NZ Friesian Association. We formed our own local club five years ago, and I'm the secretary/treasurer. The club organises two farm walks a year and we have film evenings and BBQ's."

"Through the N.Z. Friesian Association, I have been on a number of trips overseas. This month I and twenty-five other members will be travelling to Canada. We will be looking at a lot of the bigger commercial herds on the Canadian West and we will be visiting some of the top pedigree herds."

Jo has also developed a keen interest in goats.

"I now have three herds to test, two are on a small scale and still being hand milked, while the other is a larger herd on a commercial basis. When I first started with the goats I didn't know much about them. Now I look forward to going there every month and one of the goats I test has the New Zealand record. It's the same test as for dairy cows. The goat's milk is frozen on the farm and sent through to Nelson."

An interest in dairy stock stems from her childhood.

"We lived on a farm and I was interested in anything, as long as it was connected with the land. My sister and I used to help a neighbour milk his cows. We enjoyed it so much we used to send him off white-baiting while we did the milking. I had always wanted to be involved in agriculture and would have liked to have gone to Lincoln College. Instead I went home to the farm. I did everything, stockwork, ploughing, baling hay etc. My family owned a small contracting business and one of my hobbies is tinkering with motors - I really love working with them."

Training to be a herd recording officer is under the control of the Livestock Improvement Association's training officer.

"A small laboratory is used as a training base, then trainees go out onto the farms, and after two weeks with a training officer are given a van and an area of their own. I was lucky to come back to my home district - although, they are now sending girls back to their own localities, as they find they are more settled in the job.

"I've been involved in training girls. A lot of them pick it up easily, that is, they understand the working of the shed, keep out of the farmer's way and know not to make

too much noise - for the cows' sake! Some girls haven't understood the job at all and there has been a large turnover in the past. Some don't like the early morning starts or realise that you have to work in all sorts of weather, so they chuck it in. A lot of girls have gone herd testing, and then moved to working on dairy farms. Herd testing can be a step into other avenues of the dairy industry. In the future I see herd recording officers working in groups because of the large herds being run on farms under irrigation."

Rebecca Morrison
Rural
Landscape Architect

Rebecca Morrison Rural Landscape Architect

Rebecca Morrison trained as a Landscape Architect, and is now a private consultant concentrating on rural design. She has a life long desire to promote landscape awareness and create a better understanding of it. She sees this as far more important than two or three perfect design projects.

"I want the people to relate to their rural environment. The Government has totally ignored the impact of farm development on the landscape. I'm sure lectures on landscape awareness in agricultural colleges would make a great difference. I feel that getting out and talking to people is most important and I'm really committed to creating a greater understanding and awareness. I am able to do this because I have no family ties - I guess it's a mission I have. When I produced the booklet 'Landscape Guidelines for South Canterbury' farmers commented on how logical it all is when set out like that."

Rebecca talks about several influences in her early life.

"I grew up on a high country station. It provided me with a super background, it was tremendous growing up in that sort of country. Having lived on a farm I understand the desires, problems and pressures of farm life, and this makes it easier now working with farmers and their families. I'm aware of my mother's influence too; she's a keen gardener, loves plants, and so do I. I'm the middle of three girls, the safe secure middle daughter! My sisters are both involved with pottery.

" I realise now that primary school had a strong influence on me as well. We had this amazing headmaster in Standard I and II. He had a great love for the Sciences. We mapped sunspots every morning, and maths and science subjects were the high point of each day."

At university, Rebecca studied the Natural Sciences and majored in Botany. It wasn't until she had completed her science degree that she thought about a career in Landscape Architecture.

My mother mentioned landscape design and we read an outline of the course in the Lincoln College calendar. I thought it sounded right up my alley so I wrote to Lincoln and was accepted. I hadn't actually met or spoken to a landscape architect until I started. I had thought of it in rather a small sense really that is, gardens - not in whole landscape terms. The College accepted the maximum ten students that year. Everyone else had had some experience in landscape design, either by completing a unit or related to their practical work. I'd had none of that, so I was very green.

"It's a post-graduate diploma and you are supposed to have a degree in some relevant subject, like the sciences, horticulture, engineering, forestry or fine arts. In the first year you catch up on aspects that you are lacking, so for me, it was fine arts."

Rebecca spent two years at Lincoln College, and during the summer vacation worked at Turangi as a landscape assistant on the Tongariro Power Development Scheme and in the field was the only woman among the 1400 men! On leaving Lincoln, Rebecca started work with the Ministry of Works and Development.

"While I was working in Dunedin as a landscape officer, a position became available for a senior landscape architect in Hamilton. My boss told me that being a 'young woman' I wouldn't have a hope of getting the job. However, I went for an interview and got it.

"It was wonderful for getting to know the country. I was working from the Coromandel to Taupo and from coast to coast. I did all aspects of design work from planning to getting things implemented. As the MWD services all other government departments, it was very valuable experience. It was a good opportunity to see how the government system works. I did find the work somewhat frustrating though, and my major successes were in stopping 'blues' rather than in creating."

How do you see landscape architecture as a career for women?

"It's a great career for women. Landscape architecture has always had men equal with women throughout its history. It has been an acceptable career for women, perhaps because of its creative side.

"Landscape design is very rewarding work and could be adapted to a variety of lifestyles. At the moment the majority of landscape architects are employed by the MWD or local bodies, but one could freelance, or work part-time. You could share a group practice which would be marvellous if you were married with a family. You can work on your own or be part of a design office, and you can go from a very broad scale right down to detail. The right subjects are important and girls should make sure they are doing the ones that are applicable: such as geography, fine arts, the sciences, maths and biology. Landscape architecture is a marvellous combination of fine arts and the sciences."

After spending two years overseas, Rebecca came back wondering if it would be possible to work as a rural landscape architect on her own.

"I was looking after my parents small rural property for a couple of months and gave the idea a trial. The phone soon started ringing. By the time my parents returned I was thoroughly installed with tons and tons of jobs. I

talked to various groups and the rural grapevine did the rest. I've never looked back, even though I still haven't got my telephone number listed!

"Professional isolation is a concern as there are no other rural based landscape architects around here. I think that designers are often introverted people - not ravers and shouters - and perhaps that's why we are not always understood."

Rebecca enjoys talking to people about her work.

"I am often asked to run design seminars. I like to have about twenty-five people. I show slides, talk and dish out notes, and they see things around them they have never seen before. However, some farmers are already very aware of their surroundings. They will often accept a comment from a professional but perhaps not from their wives!

"I am now working on a big range of projects - whole farm design for development programmes, the siting of buildings which includes form and colour schemes, and the planning of woodlots and shelter belts.

"It's a total approach, I have just completed the next hundred year plan for a farming family that has already been there one hundred years! I work on as many newly developed properties as older established ones. I'm really trying to give rural people a greater identity."

Guiding clients rather than dictating, is Rebecca's style.

"The phone often rings, typically on a Sunday night, and it will be someone wanting advice. I go out and see what it is they need help with. It may be just a small thing to begin with. I draw up a base plan of what is already there, looking at and studying the existing site to see .

what is of value and what the problems are. Any aerial photos that are available are a great help and I take lots of others as well. Back at the studio, I work on the base plan doing a general layout, I design and draw up a scheme, write a report and send it off."

Rebecca finds that she has to set priorities in what she can achieve.

"I love doing general layout designs - I couldn't stand doing just garden designs - gardens are an ongoing, changing thing and people grow with them. Some design professionals have become 'elitist' and I don't want that to happen to rural landscape design. A design service should be available to everybody. Sometimes I just talk to people and help put them on the right track. I like to build on people's own ideas and keep a low-key informal role.

"It is wonderful to have experienced the contrast between working for the Government, where the public is a grey amorphous mass with no identity, and now, to work with individuals and see their loves, their hates and share in their responses."

What other interests do you have time for?

"Photography has always been a hobby and I use it a lot in my work. I love craft things and have taken up weaving and embroidery. Nothing organised though! I'm a nomad, I don't like ties, even garden ties!"

What do you think you will do next?

"I have no idea and no definite plans for the future. I want to remain flexible and open to change. I'm seeing the beginnings of change in the rural landscape. I enjoy playing a catalytic role and I get a real high out of helping people."

**Neroli Bruce
Woolsorter**

Neroli Bruce

Woolsorter

Neroli Bruce is a woolsorter with a local wool merchant, and has been working with wool ever since her children were toddlers, although on leaving school she trained as a psychiatric nurse.

"Jeff, my husband, was a shearing contractor, and I used to go out and help him. I worked mostly as a shedhand, or sometimes cooked for the gang. At this stage the youngest of the children was about sixteen months old. The two children came with us - they never got neglected - in fact they had a ball. The farmers were very good to them and took them for rides and things."

How did you learn the basic techniques of woolhandling?

"To start with I was fortunate as Ivan Bowen was involved in wool at that time. He was very good at teaching wool-handling techniques. It's a skill you have to pick up on the job. The idea is to work with a good shedhand, really she teaches you the ropes. It's all training and practice. Good shedhands take a lot of pride in their work, you have to work quickly and accurately - you get sorted out too - you have to be good or you're down the road! My parents just accepted what I was doing. I've always done things out of line with femininity."

After twelve years, Neroli was bored with shedhandling, and felt she needed a further interest, and decided that while working with wool she would do a course on the technical side.

"So far I have gained a Woolhandlers Certificate. This involves two years practical work - and you are also required to attend a four day course run by the NZ Wool

Board. I'm rather doing things back to front. I should have gone to Lincoln College first to do the three months Wool Certificate course, then my practical.

"Next, I would like to go even further and do a year as a full-time student and complete the Diploma of Wool Technology. I don't like to stand still. I really enjoy working with wool. It's a terrific medium to work with, each fleece has so many different characteristics, and you try and group those characteristics together. It's really fascinating. I read a lot about wool. I like to learn all about the different types of wool, and relate this to the different breeds of sheep. Altogether, it builds up a complete picture of the wool industry.

"With further qualifications I could go into sheds as a professional woolclasser. The experience of working in this woolstore has been invaluable. They have so many different types of wool. A far greater variety of fleeces in fact than I would handle on a shearing run. It is a stepping stone for me as I am looking to a wider career in the industry. I could possibly go into woolbuying, a job where you really need to know what you are doing. I realise there is the limitation of handling great big heavy bales if I went buying wool from farm to farm."

How do you manage with a job and a family?

"A typical working day would be; to be up at 6.45 a.m. and have a rush around! Between seven and eight is the busiest hour of the day, I leave for work at 8.00 o'clock. I like to leave the house in reasonable order and the children all set to go to school.

"During the winter there are fewer fleeces to work on. At the moment we are sorting crutchings which is probably more boring than most of the other jobs! I have an hour for lunch and finish at 5 o'clock. Because work is

'around the corner' there are fewer hours involved than if I was working in woolsheds."

What's it like to work in an obviously male dominated field?

"The reactions when I began at the woolstore were pretty mixed. Great for a change to have a woman around, they laughed. Then they saw that I was serious and fairly ambitious - they were not quite so sure then! On the whole it's marvellous. Most of my workmates are younger but we all get on well. We've been all through women's lib, women's place bit. I'm female and I'm proud of it. My boss has been very good and full of encouragement. I'm the only woman there, and I do miss the social contact with other women."

We asked Neroli if she would encourage others to do this sort of work.

"For women interested in doing what I'm doing, they would have to be very sensible in dealing with the initial problem of going into a male orientated world. You have to keep a sense of humour, it's no use being too serious, or getting upset all the time. The men are good to work with, I enjoy their company and we have this common interest in wool.

"If you are really interested in wool, you can start your practical experience around farms doing shedhand work first. I would certainly encourage girls into the wool industry. You can become a registered woolclasser through a scheme run by NZ Wool Board when your work reaches a satisfactory standard."

Do you have ANY spare time?

"I'm probably highly organised and don't like wasting time. I have wallpapered and painted our new home during the last two years and we are now laying out a new garden. You

learn to let go of the unimportant things. I have to be out working, I feel a better person. I have developed a sense of organisation, but I don't think I'm exceptional, lots of women could cope. I love reading and occasionally teach yoga."

We left the final comment to Neroli's boss.

"I just wish 'the boys' showed the same lively interest in wool that Neroli does, and were as active on their feet as she is."

**Belinda Bach
Veterinarian**

Belinda Bach Veterinarian

"I was mad about animals from a very young age."

We were listening to Belinda [28] now a veterinarian in a large rural group practice, brought up in the city but she regularly spent holidays with cousins on a farm.

"I went into the third form with the idea of going to vet school and school work was channelled towards that end. My subjects for school certificate were french, maths, english, chemistry, biology and geography. In the sixth form, I dropped geography and picked up physics. This hadn't been available in the fifth form so it was a new subject for me. I found it very difficult because of the late start. I really only stayed for the seventh form year for academic reasons. It's great preparation for varsity."

On leaving school, Belinda enrolled at Massey University and gained sufficient grades during the first year for entry to vet school.

"Dad was delighted, 'If you're not going to be a nurse, a vet will do!!' He was proud and I always had very good parental support.

"The second year at vet school made the first look like playschool - the work load was quite fantastic. There's a great deal of rote learning, some real hurdles, and a lot of learning that doesn't seem to have much relevance at that stage. The practical work in the fourth and

fifth years never seemed to be enough.

"The course is very broad to cover many aspects from clinical veterinary work to advisory work to industry. You get a good grounding and from there you develop your own expertise."

In the first months after leaving vet school, Belinda had a variety of temporary jobs.

"First I worked in a small rural practice as a locum, then I was a technician at a sheep research station where I got a real insight into research and trial work. I helped with weighing the sheep and at times became the grass and dung collector too!"

Belinda applied for a position down south with a three man rural practice and got the job.

"I stayed for a year. It was a very good area and they were intrigued to have a woman vet, they treated me almost as a gemstone. It was a good place to work, everyone was extremely friendly and helpful and I felt really accepted. People said 'We're amazed our new vet is a woman!!'"

In her present position, Belinda has been with the group for four years and finds there is a fair degree of acceptance from farmers.

"Not to the same extent as my experience further south though. It's a good area to work in here. There are lots of stud sheep, deer and a number of racing stables. I'm on duty one night a week, one weekend in four. You have to take a lot of responsibility and remember you can't afford to make mistakes. You can never be careless."

How do you cope with the mental and physical side of your work?

"I have a very busy personal life. At the moment I'm

doing some papers extra-murally through Massey. I climb, ski, ride, and play squash which really keeps me fit. It's very important to be fit and alert, especially when working with large animals. It's physically tough and very demanding work, that can't be under-rated. When you have a knotty problem or put a lot into a very sick animal, it takes something of you.

What animals do you particularly like working with?

"All animals, especially sheep on a flock basis. I also enjoy being involved in the research and practical side of deer farming. I love working with deer, they are superb and beautiful animals - even if one did put me up an eight foot wall!

Would you encourage other women to study for a vet degree?

"Yes, I'm sure many girls at school are unaware of the many avenues open to them once they are qualified. There are many aspects of research and lots of openings at places like Invermay Research Station or with the drug companies, meat processing companies, or overseas with such organisations as WHO or FAO. The most difficult thing for a girl is to get the first job, gain experience and get the references."

Belinda commented on the effect of combining marriage and a full-time career.

"You must think carefully about marriage and be aware of the pressures of combining both. Female students say to me that they are not going to marry, but I say, 'look at the statistics - you'll get married'. It makes for a lot of stress combining marriage with a full-time career - it's all demanding really."

Is there anything about your job that you don't like?

"What I don't like is failure. It's the most difficult thing to cope with. People can come into this too, because they don't understand WHY you failed."

We asked Belinda if she has a special interest?

"I'm very keen about the whole-farm approach. This involves working closely with the farmer and his advisers, looking at such aspects as animal and pasture production, parasite control and any other animal health problems."

When asked about her future, Julie talked of her interest in sheep research.

"At the moment I'm monitoring farms for parasite control. I've also done a research project on anthelmintic resistance.

"I'll see how the parasite project goes. I like a combination of research and practical veterinary work, but in this type of rural practice you do whatever comes up."

Kate Shield
Farm Advisory Officer

Kate Shield Farm Advisory Officer

Kate Shield [23], did not have the usual background of someone looking at a career in agriculture.

"I was brought up in a provincial town, my father's a builder and my mother's a nurse. As a child, I was an indoors girl. I just loved reading and wasn't very keen on sport, in fact, I was hopeless at team sports - or, for that matter, anything that required a bit of muscle!"

At the sixth and seventh form level, Kate specialised and enjoyed maths and the sciences, but had no idea of a future career.

"As I didn't know what to do, I went for an interview at Lincoln College, and after that decided to do an agricultural science degree. Originally, I had intended to become a science technician, as women are rather set off in that direction. I came to realise that I didn't really have the temperament, and wasn't particularly suited to that angle. I was a bit of a 'bucket chemist' and didn't have the precision that would have been required."

We asked Kate about her years at Lincoln College.

"I spent two years in the College flats which was good, and I had a lot of fun. Coming straight from a girls' school it was quite a culture shock, as there were so few girls there then. Of course, there are big changes now - a lot more girls, more clubs and the new Recreation Centre."

Where did you do your practical work?

"My first job was on my uncle's farm - I was very green and knew nothing. I spent six weeks herd testing which qualified as an allied industry experience. I really enjoyed that as it meant staying at a different farm each night. I think, though, that it's a rather poorly paid job. I did a lambing beat during August. The following summer I went onto a berry fruit farm where I had a very good boss who regularly employs female students. A bit different to the boss I worked for on a dairy farm further north - luckily he was the only bad one. I really enjoyed my time on the two mixed cropping farms where I did tractor and stock work. I found I coped with everything except for the very heavy lifting."

When did you think about becoming a farm advisory officer?

"During my third year I had particularly enjoyed doing farm management subjects. I knew I wanted to do something in that field, something outdoors and a job that was varied. I wasn't so keen on being a farm adviser, because I'd only done the minimum of practical work and I couldn't see how anyone would listen to someone with so little experience! Would they listen to me, a woman, and so much younger than many of the farmers I would be talking to? I didn't really consider farm advisory work until I went on a two weeks work experience scheme with the MAF - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries - Advisory Service and saw what the job was all about. I loved it, it was great and I thought there was no reason why I couldn't be an adviser too. I got a MAF Bursary for my last year at Lincoln which paid for field trips and helped towards other expenses. It also guaranteed me a job."

On completing her degree, Kate moved to the Central Otago area for a six months training period and stayed on.

"My boss became a Controlling Officer and I took over the

district he had been responsible for and now do all the field work in that area. I guess I happened to be in the right place at the right time, and I knew I wanted to stay there."

What is the district like where you are working?

"It's a fine wool fairly conservatively farmed area. In the future, major irrigation schemes are going to cause great changes. At the moment the rainfall is 13 inches, when the water arrives it will be more like 60 inches and this will possibly create a number of animal health problems. A different breed of sheep from the existing Half-bred and Corriedales may be required and different pastures too. The development costs of border dyking will be very high and the changes will be quite startling. Water rights are passed down from father to son like gold mining rights; in fact here, water is like gold. It's all very exciting and there is so much potential."

We asked Kate about the job and her life outside office hours.

"Being the only woman on the job can be a bit lonely at times, I'm rather in the minority and sometimes feel rather out of it. I meet few women of my own age on a social level. You can never guarantee what time you will be home at night and there are always lots of telephone calls in the evenings. I joined the local Toastmasters' group to help with my communication skills. It's hard work breaking the ice, but the welcome from the farmers and their wives was tremendous and this made it so much easier.

"I really enjoy working on financial budgets and I often check and complete these for Rural Bank loans. We give fertiliser recommendations, help with feed budgets and do a lot of the soil testing ourselves as there are no field officers here to do them just now.

"The work is varied and you meet a lot of people. You never know at the start of the day exactly what you will be doing or what will come up. We regularly attend seminars at the Invermay Research Station to keep up with the latest developments. There are over twenty-one of us working in the office here and the farm advisory officers have weekly discussions as to where everyone has been and what they plan to do. Anything of particular interest that comes up makes for lively discussion."

It was suggested to Kate that it would take two years to get into the district and be accepted by the farmers. She has up to 250 farmers to keep in touch with and this involves a lot of travelling.

"You get very sick of the roads as there is no choice of which way to go, but at least you always see what's going on because you pass the same farms so often! I really enjoy the individual farm visits. It is most satisfying when you work on a specific problem and you leave knowing you have helped someone and they have achieved something positive. The two small discussion groups I have got underway are great. I think they can be much more effective than field days. I don't like speaking in front of large groups, you really don't know if they are listening and only the more outspoken ones respond and ask questions."

Kate sees all sorts of possibilities for the future.

"I may choose to specialise in either irrigation or tussock development. Marriage may mean part-time work or job sharing, perhaps in the MAF service, although they don't encourage it at the moment. There will always be job opportunities in budgeting and future development work."

Looking back to her original concern about not having a rural background Kate recalls the comment from one farmer 'I think you have an advantage as you have no stereotyped views'."

**Mary Watson
Shearing Contractor**

Mary Watson Shearing Contractor

Sheep and wool have woven their way into Mary's life - but how has a girl from London found a niche for herself as a shearing contractor and woolclasser in the New Zealand hill country?

"I remember picking off bits of wool from fences, when out walking with my Grandmother. I was fascinated with it. I'd always had a great love of animals and at fifteen worked at the Surrey Farm Institute in the holidays. Every type of enterprise was there - dairy cows, sheep, pigs etc. As the staff went on leave, I would take over their job. They said it was unusual to have someone taking so much interest in everything. I just loved it and that's really where I learnt my basic animal and crop husbandry.

"When I was in the lower sixth, I knew I wanted to study agriculture. I was accepted at Wye College [London University Agricultural faculty in Kent] to study for a degree in animal sciences."

How did you come to be in New Zealand?

"I had decided to go overseas for further study and was very interested in New Zealand's sheep industry."

Mary took up a Commonwealth Scholarship at Lincoln College with the intention of studying for a Masterate in Agricultural Science but after a year transferred to Massey University.

"I got rather diverted onto other aspects of wool and didn't

quite finish my degree. I realised that full time theoretical research did not suit me, and I was keen to get a practical balance."

At the end of three years at Massey, Mary's friends said 'You really think you know all about wool, don't you. Tell us what count this is?'

"I hadn't a clue if it was 44's or 50's and I realised then that I knew a lot of wool science but I couldn't relate it to the practical side. I knew all about wool science but not about the wool in the shed! So I decided to do a Wool Classing Diploma. This was the best thing I had done for years. I loved it all, especially the handling of wool. I started to spin, and became interested in the whole craft side of wool.

"Any chance there was to help a farmer with his shearing, I was there. I worked for half a season with a maori family gang. They taught me shed hand skills, picking up fleeces etc. You need at least two years wool handling before you become a competent shed hand - then you are eligible for a Wool Board Wool Handler's Certificate Course.

"About this time, I was at a Massey conference and listened to a shearing contractor from down South giving the shearers' point of view. I was impressed and keen to work for him. I went down to Alexandra and found everything was just fine for me. I started classing under another wool classer but because classers were short, ended up doing a big Half-bred station clip on my own, and was given a good report. The following year I got loose on a big Merino clip from another station. It's everything to get that first break. Then you can go for a Kiwi Stencil - that means you have to class three clips from one of the three wool classifications. Your work is checked in the woolshed and the woolstore too. There haven't been women classers here in the south in the

past, although there are a number now. I worked for that shearing contractor for a total of five years and I now know he did a lot of background work to break down the initial resistance to me!

"A classer can become very competent and a well respected and valuable part of the gang. It is a very prestigious job and you, the classer, are responsible for all the wool in the shed. I try and take one learner classer on each year. They have to learn the practical side, work in wool stores, learn shed management and the whole wool industry. Gaining self confidence and authority are important, really classing the wool is the easy bit! I find girls are very careful, keen on detail, you need a good head for figures as you have to keep up the books. You have to enjoy authority."

How did you become a shearing contractor?

"It was in 1980, the existing contractor decided to give up, and I was the obvious person to take it on as I knew the run and my main concern was to keep the run together and the shearers in work. Even now my main job is still fulltime woolclassing. It's rather an unusual situation really, in that I'm a woolclasser and contractor!"

We asked Mary about her life now.

"The season begins about the end of July and from mid-August onwards I'm up each morning at 6.00 a.m., back into bed at 11.00 p.m., you grit your teeth and hope you survive. We work a six to seven day week at times until the middle of October, then we are back to five or six day weeks. After the Christmas break we work most days of the week until March. I have that month off for The Golden Shears, shows etc and April and May we spend crutching."

What are the runs like?

"They are mostly full contract, a typical gang may be - a cook, four shearers, five woolhandlers, presser and wool-classer. As the contractor, I'm responsible for their provisioning, accommodation, transport and general welfare. I had to learn all about business techniques, wages etc. There is a lot of phone work every evening and bookwork too.

"At the height of the season I have up to four gangs working and anything up to 120 people on the books in a year. I have a lot of people who work for me regularly at certain times of the year. There are very few full time regular workers and I work in with other contractors to keep each other's staff employed. Some come down from the North Island. With different shearing seasons there are often people available from other parts of the country."

As Mary's work involves supervising shearers, she has decided to learn shearing herself.

"I went to a shearing school and now do as much as I can without interfering with my wool responsibilities. I can now shear between 80 - 100 sheep a day. I wanted to learn to shear 'the right way' so as to be able to help beginners in the shed. Anyone intending to shear, should attend a course run by the Wool Board. I became very interested because it's such a challenge, and 'you shouldn't expect someone else to do what you wouldn't do yourself'.

"There's no reason why women shouldn't shear, there are quite a number doing 200 - 300 sheep a day. With shearing, women tend to be slower, they're more careful but there's no reason why, after two years or so, they can't have a reasonable tally up. There is a certain amount of opposition to them getting stands. A shearer experiences a lot of pain and you need guts - it's not an easy life. You have to be able to cope with the lifestyle too, it's long hours, demanding on social life - you can't keep dates. You always seem to be travelling. The number one concern is to shear

when the work is there. Shearers have to maintain their gear and be fit - head, hands and feet have to co-ordinate, and they have to contend with the sheep too! A good temperament is an asset. Really, they are like highly disciplined athletes. I like to look at people taking it beyond the money - it's a science, an art and craft.

"I try to do something to keep fit! I did karaté a couple of years ago and still do a lot of exercises. I would love to be able to play sport, but instead skip and do exercises in the evening.

"I collect and sell fleeces suitable for spinning and have also given lectures on shearing and wool handling. Most of this happens during the winter when things are a bit quieter.

"At the moment I'm Junior Vice-President of the N.Z. Golden Fleece Fine Wool Shearing Championship. I organise the wool side of it, and I'm also writing a new computer programme for the points system we use.

"My family is three dogs, a cat and two sheep - and they go everywhere with me in the trailer."