

# Coal is her business

**M**ANY women are said to prefer working with men rather than with other women. The obverse — whether men prefer working with women rather than with other men — has never been widely stated. Perhaps they don't, or perhaps such a preference, expressed other than as a joke, might indicate a fatal lack of manliness.

The truth is that a leavening of the opposite sex provides a stimulus to any job. Fortunately, for women, the days when a girl who worked side by side with men at a "man's" job was regarded as either a hoyden or a freak are long gone.

Now a woman's aptitudes can take her into any world, even into the other world if space can be so termed, and if the rumours of Russian women in orbit are to be believed.

## First day

No thoughts of a lofty career in space ever troubled Josephine Cherry. With a childhood ambition to become a land surveyor burning to be fulfilled she wanted to keep her feet firmly planted on the ground, but her efforts to crash the barriers of this particular profession have needed a full quota of determination and enthusiasm.

She has finally almost made it, with only one more examination in a year's time, between her and the achievement of her ambition, which is associate membership of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors . . . "though I feel this is a far from easy task," says Josephine guardedly.

Meanwhile you will find Josephine working on the Royal Arms group of open-cast coal sites, 1,100 feet above sea level on a wild stretch of mountain just beyond Merthyr, for she is the only woman land surveyor employed by the National Coal Board Opencast Executive in Wales — and only the second woman in the whole of Britain to be engaged by the Board as a land surveyor.

Her world is as all-male as a lumber camp. Every day, Josephine, tall, attractive, with the warmth of smiles, goes to the office in Cowthorpe, where she



How many women prefer working in a man's world? In the first of a Friday series about women who have jobs in what were once male preserves ENA KENDALL writes of attractive Josephine Cherry (left) who finds pleasure in the outdoor life of a surveyor. Next week meet another woman who has conquered a man's world.

works with 10 men, to go up to the site.

She told me with delight of her first day on the site, where the excavators and lorries plough among the great black scars and mounds created in the search for coal. She was a passenger in a field truck as it bumped along the track, past some of her future colleagues.

"What an effeminate looking chainman the N.C.B. have got working for them," one of them remarked in the site contractor's office later.

He was staggered to learn afterwards that the "chainman" effectively muffled in working clothes of trousers, anorak and donkey jacket, and with long hair drawn back in a French pleat, was, in fact, a woman.

## Leg pulled

Even today it still takes a certain amount of nerve to be a lone woman working among men at a job usually reserved for men. You need courage to be a trail-blazer, especially at the beginning. When Josephine first appeared on the site, she caused a stir. Then it was the men's turn to adapt themselves.

There was not so much free swearing—or they looked around to see who was about before they exercised their vocabulary, for an overheard swearword usually causes more embarrassment to its user than its unintended hearer.

A girl's difficulty in these circumstances lies in sitting in without being too much of an inhibiting force. It is a test for anyone's character.

to be broad-minded and to have a sense of humour. I get my leg pulled many times a day."

Up there on the mountain, where one step off the rough road can plunge you into mud three feet deep and where a pitiless wind can stop you in your tracks, it is a far cry from the centrally heated offices and carpeted shops in which so many women pass their working lives.

It's no place for stiletto heels and nylon stockings, but there is a tremendous sense of liberation about an outdoor job that you really want to do, which more than compensates for the softer comforts that it lacks.

Josephine has no hesitation in putting her early difficulties in getting a job down to being a woman. She tried for work in the Colonial Service, but because she was a woman her application was turned down.

"Abroad, most of the surveying jobs are in the bush and unsuitable for a woman because the work involves going out into the bush on your own or with native porters. I could have been a computer, which is a specialised inside job, but I was not really interested."

## Three girls

"Then, through the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, I obtained this job. The N.C.B. were quite satisfied with the woman land surveyor they already had in the Northumberland and Durham region, so they didn't mind taking another."

Josephine, whose home is in Chatterton, is a graduate of Chatterton College, London, where she took a degree in ge-



graphy and specialised in mathematical geography and surveying.

"In my year, there were three girls and only one boy doing this, a very unusual combination."

Her work on the sites at Royal Arms, Caeharris and Tir Ergyd involves finding the coal seams and testing their thickness and depth below the surface. Besides this, she has to find boreholes on prospective sites, a job that must be done before mining takes place.

Josephine admits that her first sight of depression-worn Dowlais and the contrast it presented with the smooth order of her native Cambridgeshire, dismayed her. But like many newcomers to the South Wales valleys she finds their ravaged surface masks an indefinable attraction. She lives three miles away in the village of Cefn Coed, only a stone's throw from the Brecon Beacons.

It is as a musician, a violinist who enjoys playing weekly in a string quartet, that she has had her greatest disappointment.

### Final string

"I was under the impression that the Welsh were very musical, but they are not. They may be singers, but their musicianship doesn't appear to go farther than that. There is no orchestra in Merthyr and the music club seems to be for people interested in listening to music rather than in taking an active part."

Josephine's summing up of land surveying was a pessimistic one.

"It's a dying profession, or rather, a profession for the few. So much is being done by air surveys, particularly abroad. I don't know if I would recommend it to a woman today, but neither would I recommend it wholeheartedly for a man. Photogrammetry is taking its place."

But her final comment was wholly feminine.

"Of course, a woman doesn't have to worry quite so much about its future—she can always get married."

The final string to a woman's bow might well be a man, but it is worth making sure that the other string is one worth drawing, too.



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"Being a girl does help," says attractive Josephine Cherry, seen here lining up her theodolite on the open-cast site near Merthyr. "When I try to dig the men take the shovel and do my work for me."





## *Official Delegate to Brussels*

ONE of the very interesting features of the Brussels Universal Exhibition just opened will be the 13th Congress of the International Federation of Jeunesses Musicales.

This Congress will last from July 12th to July 21st and the Belgian J.M. have invited 10 members from the Jeunesses Musicales of each country to be their official guests at the Congress. In England this invitation covers the organisation known as Youth and Music, and among those who have been chosen to represent officially this English body in response to the invitation is Miss Josephine Cherry, younger daughter of Councillor and Mrs. E. H. Cherry, of Barton Road, Cambridge.



Miss Cherry, whose picture you see above, is a former member of the Perse School for Girls. Her musical instrument is the violin. She played in the orchestra of the C.U.M.S. for two years before going up to London University where she has played in the University orchestra. She is secretary of University College (London) Chamber Music Club, and leader of the College Madrigal Group.