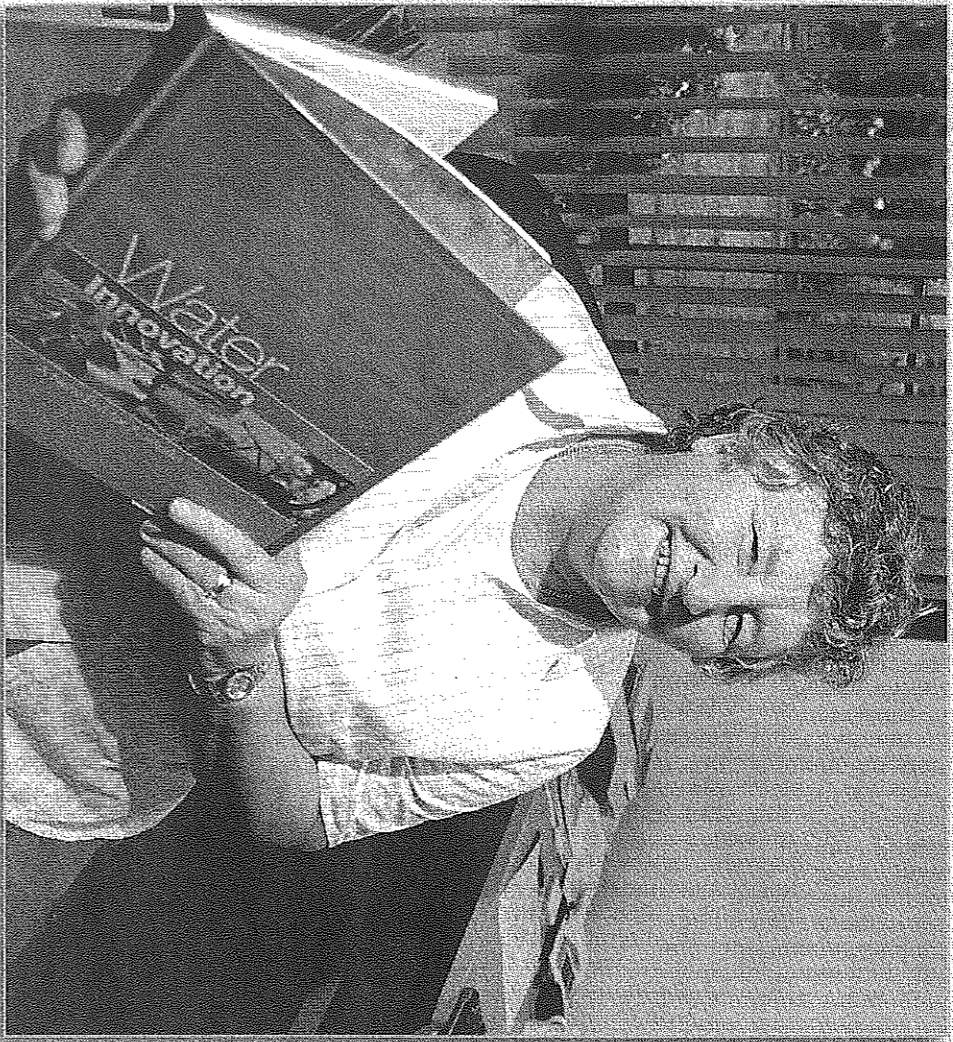
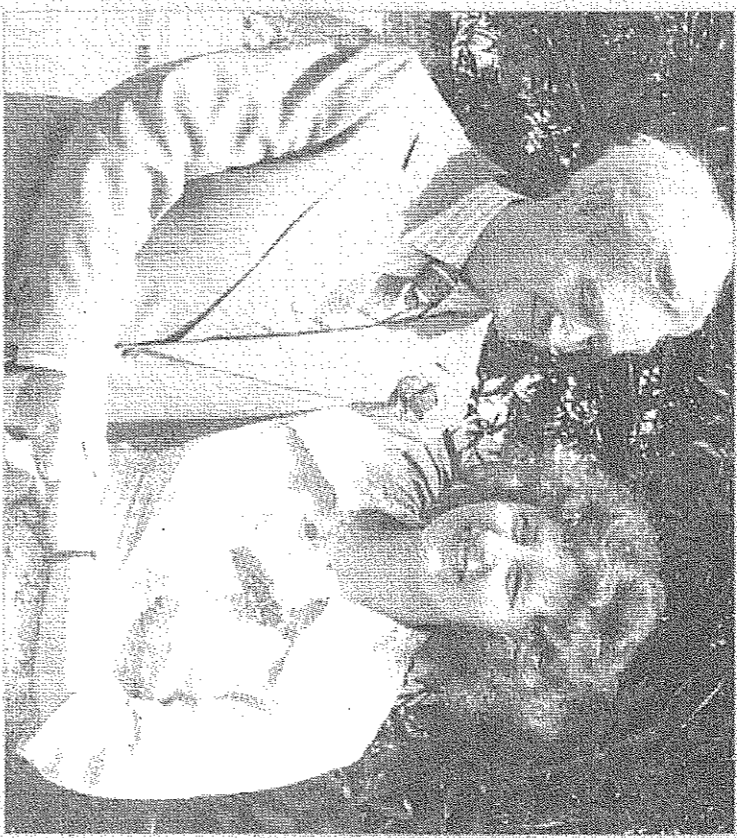


Riverina AT HOME



LEFT: Kathleen Bower was a pioneer for women at CSU and an integral part of this region's developments with water. Picture: Oscar Colman



BELOW: Frank Skinner and Kathleen Bower married in Melbourne in 1975 and are pictured here on their big day.

Bowmer's lifetime of leading the way



with Riverina magazine writer Nicole Barlow



GROWING up in the small English town of Belper, Kathleen Bowmer never imagined the impact she would have on rural Australia.

The only child used to scuba dive with her cousin.

She also had grand ideas of saving the world from starvation.

She never dreamed that she would be working for one of Australia's biggest scientific research agencies and become a pioneer for women working at Charles Sturt University.

Kathleen Bowmer, who is called Kath by all who know her, was born in 1945 in Belper, England. She remained there until she attended the University

of Nottingham to study agricultural science.

Kath specialised as a soil scientist and, while still living in Britain, secured a position with CSIRO in Australia.

At the end of 1969, Kath made the six-week journey by boat to Australia with her mother.

She arrived in Griffith in January 1970 in the middle of a long, hot summer and soon lost her peaches and cream complexion.

"It was a culture shock but I got to really enjoy it," she said.

Kath describes living in Griffith a "reality", spending quite a lot of time on irrigation farms, compared to her life back in England.

She started with CSIRO in the Division of Irrigation Research and was the only female scientist in the Griffith laboratory.

How to properly chug a beer was among the many skills she learnt during her time there.

Being the only female in a male-dominated field never deterred Kath, who later became the leader of the rivers and wetlands group and focused on the environmental needs for water. The division was

integrated into the Division of Water Resources and she became assistant chief in 1986, then deputy chief.

"I had to make it known that I would be prepared to do it," she said.

"I tried to be a good administrator, but I was very interested in the art of leadership and felt that I wanted to do it my way."

And Kath was certainly making herself known.

She was awarded the Eureka Award for environmental research in 1994. A year later in 1995, Kath was moved to Canberra with CSIRO.

"It was felt that the deputy chief had to be in Canberra," she said.

Only 12 months later, she made it "half way back to Griffith" by arriving in Wagga to take a senior role with the university.

She was appointed deputy vice-chancellor (research and academic) and head of campus.

Kath was shocked that she was able to obtain the position but feels her previous experience proved she could help to push research ahead.

It was not until she was asked to address a conference

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Kath Bowmer, pictured when she was a bridesmaid for her aunt, when she was about four years old.

PLEASE RETURN KATH