

CIS Employee Celebrated 50 year Anniversary.

A lot has changed in the last 50 years, milk was 5p per pint, a pint of beer 20p and to buy a mobile phone you would have needed £2,300! All these changes have been seen first-hand by the Cattle Information Services longest-serving employee Liz Brown.

Liz Brown began her career on 28 June 1971 as a milk recorder for what was the Scottish Milk Marketing Board. Over the 50 years, Liz has worked closely with numerous dairy farms and continues to support the dairy industry in Scotland as Regional Manager for The Cattle Information Service (CIS). From milk recording on farm her role now involves managing a team of thirty milk recorders who are first class, and she is proud to have them working across her region from Dalbeattie to Stranraer, Kintyre to Orkney.

Commenting on her 50 years of service, Liz Brown says, "In the early days of milk recording I would have to carry a heavy wooden box to each farm with lots of equipment including scales, sulphuric acid and centrifuge. All milk was tested on farm with farmers handing me metal cans with the milk from each cow. The milk was transferred into plastic buckets and onto scales to read the weight, the milk was then transferred into glass bottles to test the butterfat. All results were read by eye, not a computer in sight. All information had to be handwritten for each individual cow.

We didn't have the luxury of the automation that we have today. Dairy cows were kept in byres, a system based on hard physical work. Each cow would be tied with a neck chain in numbered stalls and fed their ration in fireclay troughs. The feeding regime involved carrying buckets from a barrow to the cow's trough at the front of each stall, followed by hay. When parlours arrived, some farms had 5x5, others had 12x12 or 20x20, now many of the larger farms have progressed to rotary parlours with up to 70 units and one of my farms has got nine robots".

Today everything is computerised with data uploaded and downloaded via the CIS computer systems. There is no longer a need to carry heavy equipment onto the farm, milk recorders simply take samples and input the yields and events into our Field Program. The samples are then shipped directly to the accredited CIS laboratory in Shropshire and within 24hrs results are available by phone, tablet, or laptop. Farmers receive all the information required to help them make decisions about improving their herd – butterfat, protein, cell counts, health testing, pregnancy checks just to name a few. Importantly they have all the information they need for their milk buyer.

"I feel honoured to have worked in an amazing industry over the last 50 years, where I have seen so much change, both positive and negative. Relationships have been key and my advice to anyone joining the industry is to work hard on building and growing your network, it pays dividends long term. Who knows what the next 50 years will bring but I am sure robot milk recorders, drones flying samples to the laboratory and live streaming of samples being analysed will be on someone's radar!!", concludes Liz.

"Having an employee serve the company for 50 years is truly a milestone," said SDCA Secretary & CIS Head of Field Services, Janette Mathie. "Liz is an amazing supporter of the dairy industry in Scotland. She collates information for her local shows and has been the commentators' assistant at AgriScot since it started. Her knowledge and experience are second to none. Not only is Liz our first employee to ever reach this phenomenal milestone, but she also truly exemplifies the incredible work ethic that we see in the dairy farming community."

Jack Lawson, former Chairman of the CIS and currently a trustee of SDCA (Scottish Dairy Cattle Association) adds, "I have worked closely with Liz for many of those 50 years and can confirm she is one of the hardest workers and customer friendly staff members I have ever experienced. Customer satisfaction is always her aim. This is proven as only about 25% of cows in South- West Scotland were recorded when she started as a milk recorder but, through her efforts and being promoted, initially to a supervisor and then ultimately to a regional manager status, the number of cows' milk recorded in Scotland has risen to nearly 75% today and is still increasing ".