



VETERAN FARMER Mr. Donald Grant, of Leeton, N.S.W., who is 100 years old, and one of his daughters, Miss Lois Grant, who manages a farm with her sister.



PET. Miss Margaret Grant feeds her pet goat on the farm at Leeton, where they pioneered rice-growing. She does all farm work except ploughing.

Rice farm successfully run by two sisters

Two sisters, daughters of one of Australia's few centenarians, have successfully managed a 525-acre property in the Leeton district, N.S.W., for the past 25 years.

They are Misses Margaret and Lois Grant, whose father, Mr. Donald Grant, celebrated his 100th birthday last March.

THE property, known as Farm 281, grows rice, oats, fruit, and vegetables, and won the first prize ever given for an Australian rice crop in 1929.

It was one of the first of six farms in the district to produce a successful rice crop, and Mr. Grant and Miss Margaret Grant went off to Melbourne to sell the rice.

It was due to their efforts that the first crop sold so well, bringing the growers £15 a ton.

Their home is a comfortable, English-style bungalow, part of which they designed themselves.

Around the walls of the lounge-room are rare Chinese prints which have been in the family several hundred years, while Doulton china, early pewter christening mugs, and other family treasures brought from England are ranged along the mantelpiece.

In spite of their open-air life, the sisters are unmistakably English, both in speech and manner.

Their father came to Australia in 1865 as a jackeroo, after receiving a grant for military service from the Duke of Sutherland.

He had been working for only nine years on a 300,000-sheep station in the Riverina district, just out of Hay, when he was made station manager, and was there altogether for 43 years.

Mr. Grant has always been noted for his wonderful handwriting, and on his 100th birthday wrote a reply in copperplate to the Premier of N.S.W. (Mr. McKell), thanking him for his congratulations.

With his two daughters, Mr. Grant came to the Leeton district at

the end of 1912, and did more than 20 years' work for the Land Valuation Commission in the township.

"When we took over the farm here rice had not been established in the Irrigation Area, and Margaret and I decided to run the farm as a partnership," Miss Lois Grant said.

They did all the work of getting the property back into good running order, and at first concentrated on growing oats, barley, and vegetables.

Experimental crop

"WHEN we heard that a new variety of rice had been introduced, Margaret and I decided to take a risk and plant 16 acres," Miss Lois Grant said.

Miss Lois Grant, the younger sister, is the "business side" of the partnership, and handles all finance and accounts. Her sister Margaret does much of the farm work.

"We began with the home farm of 71 acres, and now have more than 500 acres, part of which is share-farmed," Miss Margaret Grant said.

"We were both born and brought up on a sheep farm, and can do anything at all except work on the tractor or plough.

"I used to do the ploughing as well until I had rather a bad fall from a horse. Now we have a man who does that for us," Miss Margaret Grant said.

The sisters use an incredibly old Ford car, which has become quite a family joke, to drive round the farm.

The farm is split up into lots, part being comprised of orchards, part of rice-fields, and another part producing vegetables.

"The rice-fields are some distance from the house, so the old car comes in handy," Miss Lois Grant said. "Any other car would be ruined by driving through rice stubble the way we do with this one."

The orchard and vegetable farms are Miss Margaret Grant's special interest, and she still does most of the fruit picking herself, starting about six in the morning.

"During the war troop trains used to stop at Leeton on their way through, and we used to bring baskets of fruit from the orchard to give to the boys," Miss Margaret Grant said.

All Mr. Grant's children were born on a Riverina property in "the old house," a huge, colonial-style homestead built by the early settlers.

"It was a beautiful house, with wide lawns, and a long, tree-lined drive. We children had our own 'nannies,' governesses, and tutors and learned to ride almost before we could walk," Miss Margaret Grant said.

The Grant sisters had five brothers and two cousins living in the house which was run on strict English lines.

"There were always important visitors to the district staying with us, and though we children had never been and not heard, we had writers, musicians, and other celebrities," Miss Lois Grant said.

When she was a girl, Miss Margaret Grant went to England three times, and once travelled through the Continent.

"All the other younger children were sent to colleges eventually by my brother and I were fully educated by tutors," she said.

Among their music tutors was Miss Eleanor Digone, who had been a pupil of Franz Liszt toward the latter end of his life.

"The nine of us had our own orchestra, as we could all play the piano or the violin. We used to have some wonderful musical evenings," Miss Grant said.

"Although I love England, the law appeals to me most, and we're very happy running the farm."