



Samantha's current position:

Samantha is one of the maintenance team at Shotton Paper responsible for keeping all the machines running, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Samantha's work:

'I love the variation of what I do each day. For instance, my work might involve changing really large motors, or working on valves and pumps, or maintaining the plcs (programmable logic computers) and all instrumentation concerned with measurements, levels, temperature and flows of the paper-pulp process.'

'Sometimes there are planned shutdowns when you have only a certain amount of time to change or fix things. These are both hectic and exciting. We might be trying to install new processes or technology, and this means endless checking, adjusting and testing, but until we start the system up again we do not know whether it will work or not.'

'At other times - thankfully not too often - there have been breakdowns. I have been up to my waist in paper-pulp when a valve has broken down, battling to get it fixed before the pulp gets as high as my shoulders and is flooding the factory floor.'

Safety is a big issue. Samantha is the workshop safety representative and is involved in risk assessment. She is also a trained first aider.

Her route to success:

'Craft, design & technology was my favourite school subject and I thought the nearest thing to it would be engineering. I did a foundation engineering course after A levels and started a university course, but it was not right for me so I applied for a Modern Apprenticeship at Shotton Paper. The company was quite cautious about taking me on - I was four years older than the other apprentices and the only girl - but everything turned out really well and ten years later I am still here.'

'Along the way I have acquired a whole stack of qualifications studying part time and I'm in the fourth year of a five-year BEng in computer control. I always wanted to do a degree and I am really enjoying it as I now have the practical know-how to make sense of the theory. The company has been fantastically supportive throughout.'

More about Samantha:

Samantha and her partner have just moved into a 350-year-old stone cottage and she comments: 'I don't think it's been touched for the last three centuries! Fortunately I love DIY.'

Samantha gives talks at schools and conferences about what a career in engineering is really like. For her work promoting SET (Science, Engineering and Technology) among young people, Samantha received the IIE (Institution of Incorporated Engineers) Young Woman Engineer of the Year award in 2000, and the 2001 WISE Excellence Award.

What next?

'I am currently on maternity leave. My company has been very flexible and when I go back to work it will be to a slightly different role with more project work. That's great because it is something I've been wanting to focus on for a while.'

