

Kathleen Gordon-Gray (1918–2012)

KATHLEEN Gordon-Gray (née Huntley) died peacefully in Pietermaritzburg on January 13, 11 days before her 94th birthday. She is survived by her only daughter, Celia.

Gordon-Gray was no ordinary person. She was, in fact, a most extraordinary and generous woman. Not only was she the South African expert on Cyperaceae and some other plants of KwaZulu-Natal (see Google Scholar for a list of some of her publications), she was a wife, mother, excellent lecturer in the then botany department at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, and a much sought-after confidante and friend to students and colleagues alike.

It was her gentle and caring manner, ability to listen, and her almost infinite patience and desire for perfection, that were her enduring qualities.

I never heard her speak ill of anyone, and if she had a fault, it was that she accepted her lowly academic status in the department as women often did in those days, foregoing promotion to realise her professional calling.

Even to the last, wracked with arthritis, she was alert and working on Cyperaceae with Jane Browning and with another of her closest co-workers, C. J. (Roddy) Ward; the well-known KZN plant collector and field ecologist.

Gordon-Gray was born in Pietermaritzburg and graduated with a BSc and MSc in 1939. Her PhD was awarded in 1959. All her degrees were obtained from the University of Natal. After teaching at Girls Collegiate School (1940 to 1945), she was appointed as a junior lecturer to teach ex-servicemen. She rose through the ranks



Kathleen Gordon-Gray

in the botany department, becoming an associate professor (1977 to 1978).

She was, sadly, required to retire at the age of 60 in 1978, but continued to work on her beloved KZN plants, and the Cyperaceae in particular.

Gordon-Gray was essentially a home girl, collecting some 4 000 specimens, mainly from KZN. My fondest memories of her date back to the sixties, when the botany department in Pietermaritzburg was arguably in its heyday.

From the late fifties to the early seventies, a remarkable number of botanists passed through the department, and many undergraduates and postgraduates came under the spell of Doc G-G, as she was fondly known. If it had not been for her, I would have become a zoologist, and I know of many others who pursued a career in botany because of her influence.

Thus, almost single-handed, she recruited many botanists who became well known in their particular botani-

cal fields and then they themselves recruited other botanists and ecologists.

Some noteworthy students and colleagues were Don Killick, Denzil Edwards, Mike Wells, Clare Reid, Jim Ross, Fiona Getliffe, Roger Ellis, Charles Stirton, Esmé Hennessy, Ken Tinley, Brian Huntley and Trevor Arnold.

One thing that she is well known for is her annotations on herbarium sheets, that are often accompanied by her meticulous drawings and notes of what she believed to be diagnostic features.

When she died, Gordon-Gray was still working on Cyperaceae with Jane

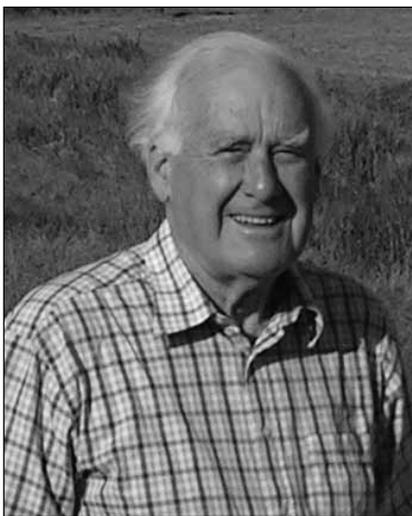
Browning. Typical of her, she shunned the limelight, and was belatedly awarded the South African Association of Botanists Silver Medal in 1998. She certainly deserved greater recognition in her lifetime.

Yet through her teaching and supervision, she was inspirational and provided sound theoretical and practical training in the fundamentals of taxonomy, anatomy, breeding systems and ecology of her beloved sedges and grasses.

EUGENE MOLL
*With acknowledgments to
The Witness*

Huw Jones (1932–2012)

HUW was a man of boundless vitality and enthusiasm with an ever-expanding range of interests. He was educated at Jesus College, Oxford and served for 12 years with the Colonial Office in Swaziland where he was District Commissioner and ADC to the Resident Commissioner. This was a formative period and awakened his lifelong interest in that part of southern Africa. In 1968 Huw left Swaziland for a brief period with the United Nations in India, followed by 18 years with the World Bank as a senior population specialist. During this time he began his highly productive career as an author. Besides writing reports published by the organisations he worked for, in 1969 he co-authored the scholarly *Development in Swaziland, A Regional Analysis*. He never lost his interest in issues of development in post-colonial Africa, but after his retirement to



Huw Jones

Gloucestershire in 1988 he was able to give full rein to his irrepressible curiosity about the Swaziland region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over the years, 18 published articles followed on diverse themes.