

They ranged from the question of the pre-colonial Swazi population to cartographical issues, the history of early white settlers, colonial units of volunteer mounted infantry, Swazi kings, the north-western sector of the Anglo-Zulu War, Swazi involvement in the Pedi War of 1879 and the Anglo-Boer War. He also addressed the vexing problem of historical sources, and matters of research methodology.

In his “retirement” Huw undertook more sustained writing challenges and published seven more books. Between 2007 and 2011 he concentrated his attention on history closer to home than Swaziland, and brought out four books on aspects of Gloucestershire local history. His three previous books were all on aspects of southern African history. *A Biographical Register of Swaziland to 1902* appeared in 1993. This was an enormous, complex, painstaking work of scholarship that spoke to his unparalleled knowledge of the history of Swaziland. *A Gazetteer of the Second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (1999), which he co-authored with his son, Meurig, was a work of a similarly high order. Both will long remain invaluable reference tools for future historians.

However, the book that will be his monument is *The Boiling Cauldron:*

Utrecht District and the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879, beautifully produced by The Shermershill Press in 2006. The literature of the Anglo-Zulu War is saturated with books that reiterate the familiar tale, but occasionally works do appear that genuinely break new ground. Huw’s deeply researched analysis of the open frontier of north-western Zululand where competing claims by the Swazi, Zulu and Boers collided is significant because the region had previously been relatively neglected by historians, and the role played in its affairs by the Swazi largely ignored. Huw’s account did more than any other book yet written to put that vital area of operations during the Anglo-Zulu War into informed context. The battle of Hlobane on 28 March 1879 was second only to Isandlwana as the greatest Zulu victory of the war, and Huw’s painstaking and detailed analysis (which built on his earlier ground-breaking articles) is undoubtedly the most authoritative now available, and functions as a sharp corrective to most other accounts.

Huw was diagnosed with cancer in March 2011, and after a short period of remission died peacefully at home on 8 June 2012 with his wife Barbara and three children at his side.

JOHN LABAND

Joy Roberts 1926 – 2011

JOY Roberts, a former chair of the Edendale Welfare Society, died on Christmas Day, 2011.

She personified the spirit of volunteerism, having worked full-time and without pay for the society for more than 40 years. She was also a former chair of the Midlands Black Sash.

Her son, Jonathan Hey, said: “She touched so many lives during her life and never with huge fuss or drama, always gave with quiet dignity and service.” He described his mother as a woman who lived by the motto: “Always rise above the occasion.”



Joy Roberts

Roberts (née Hendry) was born in Durban in 1926 and married her first husband Peter Hey at the age of 22. After their marriage they went to Cambridge University. Roberts had studied social work at Natal University and did her honours in psychology.

The young couple went to London and New York and spent a year in New Zealand before returning to South Africa where her husband accepted a post at the university in Pietermaritzburg.

Roberts developed an increasing political awareness. Her husband had started a theatre production company, the Phoenix Productions, and they put on shows that were open to audiences of all races. This meant that venues were restricted to university halls or community organisations like the old Lotus Hall at the bottom of East Street. In 1961 they put on the first mixed-race play to a mixed-race audience.

Roberts joined the Black Sash in 1962 and became chair of the Edendale Welfare Society in 1967.

In an interview with the Alan Paton Oral History Project last year Roberts discussed her involvement in the Black

Sash. “I was involved in Edendale Welfare and I used to have arguments with some people who thought it was wrong to do the government’s business for them. ‘You shouldn’t be involved in welfare. Just let them sink’, they said. ‘It’s the state’s responsibility. You are doing their job for them.’

“Well,” said Roberts, “that was hard, because you couldn’t turn your back on the children. I couldn’t, anyway.

“You could do battle in small ways — things like grants, which, at that stage, were very much geared to white grants being higher than Indian grants, and coloured grants, and black grants were very small.

“So you could put in your word of protest there.”

Her first husband died in 1962 after a long illness, and in 1967 she married Simon Roberts, a prominent lawyer. While he battled on the legal front, she did her bit in the trenches.

Roberts’s commitment was recognised by the city in 2005 when she was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by former president Nelson Mandela.

But instead of putting the photograph of herself and Mandela in a place of prominence, Jonathan said, his mother put the photograph quietly behind the door, not wanting to draw attention to it.

Roberts will be remembered as a humanitarian who made a big difference to many people’s lives in her quiet way.

She leaves behind her son Jonathan, daughter Jean and step-children, Guy, Stephanie and Nicola.

A memorial service was held for her at the Church of the Ascension in Hilton.

TRISH BEAVER

(With acknowledgments to The Witness)