

OBITUARIES

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ANNE HORSFALL (1927–2021)

Anne Horsfall, who died on 24 June 2021, was a remarkable woman and respected amateur botanist. Perhaps because of poor health in her last decade, she had left the BSBI and she may now only be remembered by those who were her contemporaries, her family and many friends. However, her contribution to, and interest in, botany over her lifetime was great.

Anne came from a wealthy and high achieving background. Her father, Ewart, served in the Army and Royal Flying Corps in World War I in France, and was awarded both a Military Cross and a Croix de Guerre. He had won a Gold medal rowing in the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, and after the war he won a Silver medal at Antwerp in 1920. Her mother, Myra, had a lifelong interest in travel and adventure. Anne inherited this stamina and 'wanderlust' from her parents. She was born on 27 March 1927 and grew up at the family home near Cheltenham, alongside her two older brothers. She went to Cheltenham Ladies' College, and then on to Oxford, where she read Botany at Lady Margaret Hall, graduating with a Class III degree in 1949.

Anne first joined the BSBI in 1946 and attended a field meeting in Glen Affric in 1947, held to survey an area threatened by hydroelectric development. The other participants included a host of distinguished (or subsequently distinguished) botanists, including Maybud Campbell, Mary McCallum Webster, Canon Charles Raven, John Raven, Noel Sandwith, Douglas Simpson, Tom Tutin, Eleanor Vachell, Ted Wallace, Max Walters, 'Heff' Warburg and Alfred James Wilmott. She recalled some of the party going into huddles and heard that they were discussing Rum, but it was only when Karl Sabbagh's book *A Rum affair* appeared in 1999 that she realised that they must have been discussing the remarkable



Anne Horsfall

Hebridean records emanating from Prof. J.W. Heslop Harrison and his team.

After graduating, Anne taught overseas for many years, first in Canada and then, drawn to Africa, in Uganda, Malawi and finally Kenya. Her brothers were farming there, and her last teaching post was quite close to them. Anne went on safaris all over East Africa during these post-war years. Since climbing was her main and favourite pastime she joined the Mountain Club of Kenya and climbed the Ruwenzoris, Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro – the highest peaks in Africa. She had great physical and mental stamina, was a strong walker yet, as a

botanist, she always took time to observe the plants at every altitude.

Returning to England in the 1970s, Anne settled in Stoborough near Wareham, Dorset, in a house she inherited from her mother. Anne always claimed that Dorset had more flowering plants than any other county in England. The hectad in which she lived, SY98, certainly had the highest number of native species in the BSBI's *New Atlas* survey, which appears to support her claim! Anne explored across the county, and soon became a recognised expert on the flora of Dorset. She was also a much-valued member of the Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT), with which she was actively involved for over 40 years. She was on the DWT Committee, several of the DWT nature reserve management committees, and a leader of field excursions and surveys.

Anne's curiosity for the nature around her, and her energy in exploring new places and finding new plants, was insatiable. As an educator she believed in sharing her knowledge and encouraging others in her passion for plants. She accompanied Butterfly Conservation transect walks and played a valuable role as plant identifier. She carried out an extensive fieldwork project, revisiting many of the localities that Ronald Good had surveyed in the 1930s when writing *A Geographical Handbook of the Dorset Flora* (1948). Anne's observations of the changes in plants and habitats that had occurred in the intervening 40–50 years were published in a series of papers published in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* between 1981 and 1987, with a further paper on change in 1990. She also wrote papers on Dorset's Domesday and medieval woodland (1997, 1998), two books, *Names of wildflowers in Dorset* (1991) and *Discover Dorset: Woodlands* (1997) and the chapters on coastal and woodland habitats in the DWT publication *The Natural History of Dorset* (1997). She also contributed captions for many species of Scrophulariaceae to the *New Atlas* (2002).

Anne was a modest but talented artist, who preferred to work with watercolours. She was inspired by Mary Grierson, and possibly her great-great-grandmother, Dorothy Horsfall, a notable

flower illustrator. Her botanical/flower paintings were wonderful and many adorned the corridors of her house. She enjoyed attending the amateur painting courses in the local village hall, and happily rose to all the challenges set by the tutor, while enjoying the company of the other participants.

Anne's home was immediately adjacent to Stoborough Heath NNR, and close to Hartland Moor NNR. The garden, though extensively planted with shrubs (rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas) and trees, with a pond, vegetable patch, and prized rockery, was latterly essentially left to be an extension of the heathland. The lawn was colonised by several species of orchid, which Anne loved, as well as ants that attracted Green Woodpeckers. As time passed and she was less able to get outside, the garden became even more wild. On one visit we counted eleven very large wood ant nests, and badgers had established a large sett. Once, when camping on her lawn, a mole made its presence known to us under the tent, and the churring of Nightjars finally brought sleep! While she was able Anne would delight in hunting for different fungi around the garden and identifying them all, and she kept an eye on the Dorset Heath (*Erica ciliaris*) and Marsh Gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) just beyond the fence. It was a naturalist's paradise.

Despite her very close attachment to Dorset, its wildlife and conservation, Anne did not give up her travels in search of new places and plants, until ill-health prevented it. Expeditions included Afghanistan, the Nepal Himalaya, Egypt and Arabia, and the Antarctic; not forgetting a visit to the Highlands of Scotland for her favourite arctic-alpines on Ben Lawers, and then north around Inverness, with Margaret Barron, then Recorder for Easternness.

Lastly, but by no means least, Anne was a caring sister, a no-nonsense aunt and cousin, full of fun and humour, happily sharing her knowledge and expertise throughout her life. She joined her family whenever possible; she bowled a mean ball at cricket, and when nearly 80, volunteered as goalie at one family Christmas football match. Remarkable indeed!

We thank the following for their contributions: Anne's family, her friends, David Pearman (for the paragraph on the Glen Affric meeting), Nigel Webb (Trustee and former Chairman of the Dorset

Wildlife Trust) and Hannah Wiler (Dorset Wildlife Trust).

Ron and Lynnette Youngman