

## OBITUARY

### ROBERT BAILY DRUMMOND (1924–2008)

Many people from all walks of life interested in something to do with plants visited the National Herbarium, now in the Botanic Gardens in Harare, and came across Bob Drummond, and probably most people who met him won't forget the experience. Bob was very much his own person. Usually, he was interested and charming, but he could also be non-committal, abrupt or even downright rude. He was as interested in people as he was in plants and his memory of the people he had met was as remarkable as his knowledge of the plants. When identifying a plant, which he seemed to be able to do almost regardless of the state of the specimen, he would want to know about both the plant and the person and where they both came from, which he also remembered. In fact Bob Drummond was an institution at the herbarium for 38 years, much of the time as Curator, and even after he had retired he was often there. His knowledge of all aspects of the flora was phenomenal, and his passing away leaves a gap in botanical knowledge that will probably never be filled.

Robert (Bob) Baily Drummond (Figure 1) was born in Petersfield, Hampshire in the UK on 27 February 1924, and died at his home in Harare on 3 June 2008 aged 84. He grew up in Leeds where his father worked in the Department of Agriculture at the local university. As a child, Bob collected plants and became familiar with the British flora. An interest probably fostered by his mother, a keen member of the British Wild Flower Society, to which she submitted her flowering plant records each year. When he was 14, he travelled with an aunt to the United States for four months to see relatives, visiting New Orleans, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and the West Coast, a trip that probably broadened his knowledge of plant diversity.

Bob attended Leeds Grammar School from 1932 to 1942, studying classics and obtaining A-level passes in both Latin and Greek and then continued to study them for the next year at Leeds University. He was very proud of his knowledge of those subjects and regarded his training in them as the perfect preparation for a botanist. In 1943 he volunteered for the Royal Navy, serving as a coder in Sydney, Australia with the British Pacific Fleet. In 1946 he was released from the Navy, returning to Leeds University, where he then studied Botany and Zoology, obtaining a B.Sc. in 1948 at which stage he was reputed to have been able to identify and name every plant in the United Kingdom.

He started his professional career as a botanist in January 1949 when he was appointed by the Colonial Office as an Experimental Officer at the Kew Herbarium working on the *Flora of tropical East Africa*. It was here that Bob acquired a sound knowledge of the African flora through his interest in sorting specimens into families and genera. Bob's first major collecting trip was the first Colonial Office Expedition to East Africa with J.H. (Jim)

Hemsley in 1953. The primary aim was to visit some of the localities collected by German botanists earlier in the century, many of their specimens having been destroyed during the bombing of Berlin. They left in January 1953 for nine months, collecting in northeastern Tanzania (especially the Usambara, Nguru and Uluguru Mountains), in coastal Kenya and Uganda west of Lake Victoria. Their outstanding collection of around 4 800 numbers is said to be one of the most comprehensive from East Africa (Polhill, Polhill & Robertson in prep.), and duplicates were sent to, amongst others, the Nairobi, Lisbon, Missouri and Pretoria herbaria. Bob once commented that in those days, before plastic bags, specimens had to be put straight into the press which was very time consuming in the field.

It was at Kew that he met his future wife, Joan Morris, at that time a technician working for Noel Sandwith on tropical American plants. They married in 1955 just before Bob took up a botanical post in the then Southern Rhodesia Government Herbarium (SRGH) in Salisbury (now Harare, Zimbabwe) in May 1955. In those days the herbarium was housed in a corrugated iron shed at the Research and Specialist Services complex. The post was created largely to enable Hiram Wild, the then Government Botanist to spend a lengthy period at Kew to make a start writing volume 1 of the recently begun *Flora zambesiaca* in collaboration with Arthur Exell. It was in



FIGURE 1.—Robert (Bob) Baily Drummond (1924–2008).



Harare that Bob and Joan spent the rest of their married lives and where their two daughters, Jean and Janet were born.

Bob undertook a number of major collecting trips: to the Makgadikgadi Pans in northern Botswana in April 1957 with Stanley Seagrief, to western Zambia in November 1959 with J. Cookson, to Zambia's North-western Province in March 1961 with R.O.B. Rutherford-Smith, and to Mwinilunga in the same area with Graham Williamson in June 1963.

Graham Williamson recalls that 'during our trips we would collect large numbers of plants placing them in sealed plastic bags. At our campsites at night I would set up a table and start up a Honda generator lighting two bulbs, one clear, linked to the table so Bob could sort and press the plants, the other, an ultra-violet light some distance from our camp so I could collect, throughout the night, moths and other insects'; and he goes on, 'Many of the expeditions were extremely hazardous especially during the rains. One such occasion we almost lost the 4 × 4 vehicle which was perched precariously on a pont while crossing the swollen Kalungushi River. Often Bob would wet the pressings with petrol—while smoking. During camp stops of more than a day we would lie our wet papers in long lines to sun dry'.

Bob Drummond visited Botswana in 1965 with Hiram Wild and again with Helen Moss, Richard Mithen and Helen Kibblewhite in the mid 1980s. In addition, Bob made extensive collections from various parts of Zimbabwe, particularly the mountainous eastern parts and dry southern lowveld between the late 1950s to early 1970s; two that he mentioned were to the Chimanimani with John Ngoni, Steven Mavi and Rosemary Grosvenor during which all collections were recorded as Grosvenor numbers, and in 1971 to Gonarezhou with John Ngoni and Steven Mavi. His collecting numbers totalled over 10 000.

In his enthusiasm, Bob Drummond was always so willing to share his knowledge and he played a major part in early schoolboy expeditions. Even when he did not accompany expeditions he briefed them before the trip, showing the boys how to collect and press plants correctly and advising them on keeping a notebook with their collection records, and then helped them identify their specimens when they returned.

He accompanied the Rhodesia Schools Exploration Society expeditions to Mateke Hills in 1958. John Lovridge, a 16 year-old schoolboy sitting on the back of a lorry waiting to depart, first saw Bob as a tall, fair man with red cheeks who was collecting weeds on the roadside and putting them into a plant press. He found Bob 'the walking encyclopaedia of plant names that I needed! He seemed to know everything, and I just soaked up the names, and vegetation types, some of which I remember clearly to this day'. The report of the Mateke expedition records that 426 species and subspecies of vascular plants were collected in two weeks.

John goes on: 'From those idyllic expedition days I stayed in touch with Bob. I sent him plants collected from around Gwelo and from our family 100-acre plot in

Melsetter, now Chimanimani, and received neat lists of his determinations at regular intervals. I also collected plants on the Rhodesia Schools Exploration Society Midlands Branch expeditions to Sanyati and Sabi-Lundi junction and on the Matabeleland branch's expedition to Sentinel Ranch. Like Bryan Simon, I was stimulated in my botanical interests by Bob's genuinely caring attitude that I should receive names for plants I collected as quickly as possible'.

Other Rhodesia Schools Exploration Society expeditions that Bob went on were to Tuli in 1959 and to Buffalo Bend in 1961. Bryan Simon writes: 'I collected many grasses on the expedition when Bob was leader of the botany group to which I was assigned, and I became impressed what attention had to be given in pressing specimens, especially when it was windy and teamwork was the order of the day'.

I remember when Bob came on a Tree Society trip in 1985 to Ruckometje Camp on the Zambezi River at Mana. This was towards the end of April and there had been late, very heavy rains and the rivers were flooded, so everywhere they went they had to walk, including through the flooded rivers. One walk, having forded the river up to our waists in water, was more or less an all-day affair. We reached a pre-arranged point and travelled back by canoe. But in the meantime it was very hot and we seemed to go on for ever. At one stage Bob appeared to have got left behind and I was getting seriously worried—and then the somewhat overweight Bob reappeared, rather flushed with the heat, a huge fertiliser bag full of plant material in his hand and a very smug look on his face. He had had a wonderful time. Had we seen this and had we seen that and of course we hadn't, but he had.

Bob had an eye for all plants of interest and an uncanny ability to spot small, insignificant ones, and recognize something as being different. For instance his discovery of the monospecific *Triceratella drummondii* (Commelinaceae) in 1957 whilst sitting having lunch. He recognized it as new, and sent it to Brenan at Kew, who soon described it. Bob was the only person to find it again—in the same place 10 years later—until 30 years later when it turned up on sand dunes on the Mozambique coast, some 1 000 km away. Many of his collections became type specimens for newly described species. Furthermore, he had 13 species of plant named after him.

Bob was as interested in people as he was in plants and he would spend hours talking with visitors to the Herbarium. He had the exceptional ability to name anything from small sterile scraps to fertile material, and to recognize what was a new record. Anyone who brought specimens was encouraged to collect more and shown how to do this better, and was helped with identification. Bob was a true botanist in the widest sense, willing to identify the plants in any family. And he was as at home in the field as he was in the herbarium.

In later life, when wanting plants identified, if the person was prepared to work with him he would set about identifying the specimens immediately, clearing bench space, and bringing bundles of named specimens



from the cupboards for comparison. While engaged in this work he was constantly interrupted by other people, either requiring his professional services or casual visitors, interruptions he enjoyed, or by workers in the herbarium or botanic garden wanting to borrow money (but no one was ever seen coming to repay him). Identifying a batch of specimens could take several days, sometimes necessitating returning to the herbarium at weekends, or after supper and working late at night in order to get the job done.

It was this attitude and support, that paid no attention to working hours or days, which encouraged many people to make collections throughout the *Flora zambesiaca* region. When he was the Curator, the National Herbarium was always kept up to date and became the main centre of knowledge of the region, attracting many researchers and other visitors.

Although Bob didn't publish much himself, his contribution to many other authors is acknowledged in numerous books including *Keith Coates Palgrave's Trees of southern Africa* to which he made an enormous and invaluable contribution, including checking the whole of the original text. It was a lot of work and not very stimulating for Bob so Keith had to use a lot of patience to persuade him to keep at it. He used to give Bob about 30 pages at a time and sometimes when he returned the checked pages his comment was 'You can't say that'. Whether Keith did or did not follow his advice I don't remember.

From 1968 to 1994, Bob Drummond was associated with the journal *Kirkia*, now known as the *Zimbabwe Journal of Botany*, in the roles of Co-editor, Assistant Editor and Consultant.

Bob Drummond was made an Honorary Vice President of the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe in recognition of his contributions to the Society since its establishment in 1969. Michael Kimberly said that when the first issue of *Excelsa*, the illustrated journal of the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe

was compiled in 1971, Bob assisted and read through the entire text and made all necessary corrections to ensure the botanical accuracy of the contents. He assisted in the same way with 12 of the subsequent volumes of *Excelsa*. Likewise, with the *Excelsa Taxonomic Series*, which contained the revisionary work by L.C. Leach on the Euporbiaceae and the Stapeliaceae, Bob was most helpful and generous with his advice and assistance.

There are many articles, papers and reports where Bob Drummond's help is acknowledged. Many authors owe him a great debt for naming their specimens and pointing out what was known already and what was of particular interest. And probably his greatest contribution was the huge amount of information he so willingly passed on verbally to one and all. He certainly influenced and assisted many people and I was very privileged to be one of those people and to acknowledge it with grateful thanks.

There are 13 species which were named after R.B. Drummond: Acanthaceae: *Blepharis drummondii* Vollesen (2000); Asteraceae/Compositae: *Bidens drummondii* Wild (1967), now included under *Bidens oligoflora* (Klatt) Wild; Asteraceae/Compositae: *Emiliella drummondii* Torre (1975); Celastraceae: *Maytenus drummondii* N.Robson & Sebsebe (1987), now under *Gymnosporia drummondii* (N.Robson & Sebsebe) Jordaan; Commelinaceae: *Triceratella drummondii* Brennan (1961); Leguminosae: Papilionoideae: *Crotalaria drummondii* Milne-Redhead (1961), now under *Crotalaria scassellatii* Chiov.; Leguminosae: Papilionoideae: *Tephrosia lurida* Sond. var. *drummondii* Brummitt (1968); *Tephrosia longipes* var. *drummondii* (Brummitt) Brummitt; Loranthaceae: *Englerina drummondii* Polhill & Wiens (1998); Lythraceae: *Nesaea drummondii* A.Fernandes (1974); Orchidaceae: *Oligophyton drummondii* H.P.Linder & G.Will. (2000), now under *Benthamia drummondii* (H.P.Linder & G.Will.) Szlach. & Rutk.; Podostemaceae: *Leiothylax drummondii* C. Cusset (1980); Rubiaceae: *Tarenna drummondii* Bridson (1979); Rutaceae: *Vepris drummondii* Mendonça (1961).

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