

HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENTIFIC BOTANICAL RESEARCH

The history of the Association dates back to 1960 when Dr R.A. Dyer, then Chief of the Division of Botany, Department of Agriculture, created a book fund to enable the book *Wild Flowers of the Transvaal* to be published *pro bono publico*. This was a private, non-profit-making fund to which sponsors were invited to contribute. After the book was successfully published, it was found that there was money left in the fund. Dr Dyer decided to build up the fund to promote scientific research by furthering: 1, the official journal of the Division, *The Flowering Plants of Africa* and its Afrikaans counterpart *Die Blomplante van Afrika*; 2, the

Mary Gunn Library, also of the Division; and 3, any botanical publication deserving financial support.

On 13 May 1991 the fund was converted into an association as this was considered appropriate. The fund was renamed the *Association for the Promotion of Scientific Botanical Research*. Management of the Association was entrusted to three trustees, all members of the Division of Botany (later to become the Botanical Research Institute, then the National Botanical Institute and presently the South African National Biodiversity Institute). The trustees were: Dr B. de Winter as Chairman, Dr D.J.B. Killick, and Dr O.A. Leistner as Honorary Secretary. The

objectives of the Association remained virtually the same. Regular meetings were held mainly to discuss investments and disbursement of the Association's funds. Money from the Association was chiefly used to pay free-lance artists for plates executed for *The Flowering Plants of Africa/Die Blomplante van Afrika* and incorporated in the Art Archives of the Institute.

No requests for financial support for the publication of botanical work were received by the Association, and since 1994 the Mary Gunn Library has not asked for support. Consequently the Association focused increasingly on its first and most important objective, namely to support the Institute in nurturing botanical art in Africa by means of its publication *The Flowering Plants of Africa* (its Afrikaans counterpart *Die Blomplante van Afrika* was discontinued). Eventually this became, in effect, the sole objective of the Association.

In 1996 Dr M.M. Wolfson, Director Research Services of the Institute, was added as a trustee, as it was considered necessary to include a current member of the Institute in the management of the Association.

Gill Condy, since 1983 a resident artist of the then Botanical Research Institute and now the South African National Biodiversity Institute, was instrumental in utilizing funds of the Association for the purchase of works

by a wide range of botanical artists, the restoration of artworks in the possession of the Institute and in the sale of back numbers of *The Flowering Plants of Africa/Die Blomplante van Afrika* for the benefit of the Association. Emsie du Plessis, a member of the Publication Section of the Institute, assisted with banking transactions and payment of artists.

At a meeting of the Association, on 25 November 2004, it was decided to donate the assets of the Association, including the artworks purchased with its funds, to the South African National Biodiversity Institute, as a gift to the Nation and for their exclusive use for the promotion of botanical art, particularly in Africa. Dr Wolfson assured the meeting that the financial assets of the Association would be assigned to an Institute project fund for the exclusive use by the botanical artist(s). Thus, after 44 years of serving the interests of South African botany, the Association ceased to exist.

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