

Hugh Taylor (Figure 3) was born in Simon's Town on 20 January 1925. In his youth he was strongly influenced by music and the natural environment. His father, Colin Taylor, was a musician and composer, formerly Music Master at Eton College, England and later a lecturer at the University of Cape Town School of Music. A love of music was passed on to Hugh who learned to play the piano. Hugh's mother was a member of the well-known Miller family after which Miller's Point was named. The Taylor family owned the farm 'Froggy Pond' at Simon's Town and a house known as 'The Shack' on the Cape Peninsula west coast in what is now the Cape of Good Hope section of the Cape Peninsula National Park. Hugh spent many weekends and holidays horse-riding and walking in these as yet unspoiled areas. His introduction to the fynbos and climbing the mountains thus came at an early age. These early influences set the tone for much of what was to happen in Hugh's rich and active life.

Hugh's mother Doris saw the need for conservation of the southern Cape Peninsula colloquially known as 'Cape Point' and she actively petitioned the authorities to proclaim the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. The incorporation of this reserve into the recently proclaimed Cape Peninsula National Park bears testimony to the value of far-sighted actions to conserve areas of natural beauty and, as is well known, great plant species richness.

After matriculating at Rondebosch Boys' High School, he studied at the University of Stellenbosch, where he obtained a B.Sc. (Forestry) degree in 1946. Hugh then travelled abroad on a 'world tour' with his father, who was examining for the Royal Schools of Music. Hugh fondly remembered this trip with his father and always enjoyed travelling subsequently. In 1948 he joined the Department of Forestry and worked first as Assistant District Forest Officer, stationed at Bredasdorp, then in 1950–1951 as the District Forest Officer. From there he moved to Knysna where he was Forest Research Officer from 1952–1954. He then moved back to Cape Town in 1955 as District Forest Officer and married Dulcie Brooke-Smith in 1957. They lived briefly at Jonkershoek, Stellenbosch, where Hugh was again Forest Research Officer. In 1958 they moved to Pietermaritzburg where he held the post of Forest Extension Officer and Lecturer for two years at the University of Natal and at Cedara College. Their first daughter, Jennifer was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1959. It was during this period that Hugh became well acquainted with the Drakensberg by attending the Mountain Club of South Africa July camps. In 1960, Hugh resigned from

the Department of Forestry to attend the University of Cape Town where he obtained a B.Sc. (Honours) degree in Botany in 1961. It was in this year that their second daughter, Linden, was born in Heathfield, Cape Town. The Department of Agriculture then employed Hugh as fire ecologist at Stellenbosch (1962–1964) before being appointed to the Botanical Survey Section of the Botanical Research Institute in 1964. He then became the Officer in Charge of the Botanical Research Unit, Stellenbosch, in the same year, a post he held continuously till 1973.

The following excerpt from an article by C. Kavanagh in the January 14, 1955 edition of *The Outspan* epitomises Hugh's dedicated approach to Botany: 'When Mr Hugh Taylor, formerly of Cape Town, a learned young Forest Research Officer, took me through the forest (Knysna) I asked the obvious layman's question: "Why don't you patch with indigenous trees?" It turned out that this was asking for punishment, which I got. His reply

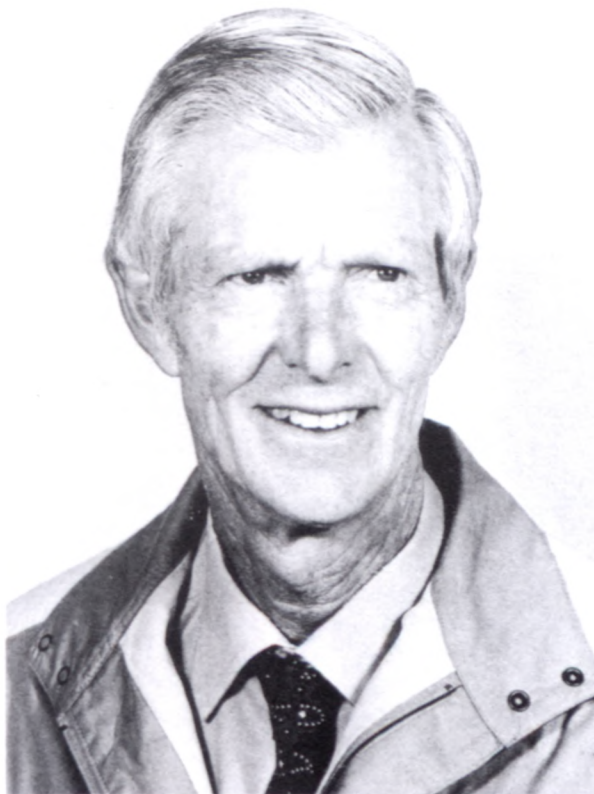


FIGURE 3.—Hugh Colin Taylor (1925–1999). Photo by Adela Romanowski.



FIGURE 4.—Hugh Taylor collecting vegetation data in a demarcated plot at Cape Point, 1966.

was a running lecture in foresters' language delivered during an afternoon of scrambling and slithering on steep forest paths, or forcing our way through ferns and brambles. We even came disturbingly near the bad-tempered Knysna elephants, but Mr Taylor lectured on. By sundown I felt that I had seen every tree in the forest, but had merely been taken to a few of the experiments in indigenous tree-growing begun by foresters as long as 50 years ago, and still incomplete.'

Hugh Taylor's survey methods were strongly influenced by John Acocks, the doyen of vegetation survey in South Africa whom he met in 1962. He accompanied Acocks in the field on a number of expeditions through the fynbos and elsewhere and was always amused by Acocks's formal manner. Acocks never failed to address Hugh simply as 'Taylor'! Following Acocks's example and later using other methods, Hugh conducted many formal and *ad hoc* surveys of the vegetation of the south-western Cape. He developed an extensive knowledge of the fynbos flora as well as the forest flora of this region.

Hugh's roots drew him back to the Cape Peninsula, where his family had been allowed to retain 'The Shack' in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve (The Shack was demolished in 1968). In the mid-1960's he initiated a survey of the vegetation of the reserve. The objective was to describe the plant communities for which he obtained an M.Sc. degree from the University of Cape Town in 1969. This survey formed the basis for a subsequent management programme for the vegetation of the reserve. It was during this time that Hugh's attention was drawn to the threat posed by alien invasive plants to the natural fynbos, both on the Cape Peninsula and elsewhere. He campaigned vigorously to bring the scourge of alien invasive plants to the attention of the public through a number of popular articles and his involvement in numerous 'hack groups'. He spoke often about the effects of alien vegetation on the fynbos of Red Hill above Simon's Town, where his mother and sister lived, an area he knew intimately.

The methodology used by Hugh Taylor for his Masters degree was based on Association Analysis. He

applied the method to the data he had collected from 100 samples laid out on a regular grid over an area of 78 km<sup>2</sup> in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve (Figure 4). Upon completion of this work he travelled to Europe in 1971 where he spent nine months in Germany, studying under Reinhold Tüxen, a well-known phytosociologist who lived in Rinteln. Tüxen had in turn studied under the famous Joseph Braun-Blanquet after whom the now extensively used tabular method of sorting vegetation communities was named. While at Rinteln, Hugh and his wife Dulcie travelled to Montpellier in the south of France to meet Braun-Blanquet (Figure 5), a rare privilege for a South African phytosociologist.

The application of the Braun-Blanquet phytosociological method was a new introduction to South Africa at about the time Hugh returned from Germany. He collaborated with Marinus Werger, a phytosociologist visiting South Africa from Holland and employed by the Botanical Research Institute, and Fred Kruger of the Department of Forestry in a study of the vegetation of Swartboskloof, Jonkershoek, near Stellenbosch. The objective was to test the floristically based method in species-rich fynbos vegetation. The method proved to be successful



FIGURE 5.—Hugh Taylor with the esteemed J. Braun-Blanquet at Montpellier, France, 1971.

and became favoured as the most suitable one for studying not only fynbos but also for all other vegetation types in South Africa.

A few years after his return from Germany, Hugh was transferred to Pretoria for a brief period as Officer in Charge of the Botanical Survey Section (1974–1975), returning to his former position at Stellenbosch in 1976.

Hugh was a keen mountaineer and, even when climbing for pleasure he would often stop to consider an interesting plant or indeed do a 'plot'. Here he would make copious lists of plant species following the methods learnt from John Acocks. In the late 1970's Hugh conducted a study of the Rooiberg near Ladismith in the southern Cape. This gave him the opportunity to familiarize himself with the somewhat more arid fynbos flora so different from that found in the moister mountains of the southwestern Cape. This was to stand Hugh in good stead when he moved his research focus to the vegetation of the Cederberg.

Hugh published a total of 70 scientific and popular articles and papers and was always eager to inform people about fynbos, its diversity and conservation. In the early 1980's he served on the Steering Committee of the Fynbos Biome Project. The chapter entitled 'Capensis' written for the book *Biogeography and ecology of southern Africa* edited by M.J.A. Werger (1978) served well for this project as a benchmark paper for the state of knowledge of fynbos at that time. Hugh's meticulous records and personal knowledge gained over many years were in constant demand by researchers involved with the Fynbos Biome Project and he made a significant, if somewhat undocumented, contribution to the success of that project.

The Taylors left Stellenbosch in 1983 and moved to Clanwilliam to allow Hugh to be closer to the Cederberg which he loved and where he was to survey the vegetation for the next five years. During his stay in Clanwilliam, Hugh would ride up the rough mountain tracks of the Cederberg in a Land Rover (Figure 6) and when the tracks ended, would proceed on foot to his selected mountain survey sites. After toiling in the sun for hours, he would, after a light lunch, characteristically fill his pipe, smoke for a while and then have a nap under a nearby bush, tree or rock that offered a vestige of shade. Anyone working with Hugh soon became used to this post-prandial ritual! The half-hour snooze invigorated Hugh to carry on with his work for the remainder of the afternoon!

Hugh was always enthusiastic about conservation and he played an active role in the Cederberg Interest Group, established under the auspices of the Botanical Society of South Africa. He participated in the Cedar Restoration Project and was involved with WWF-SA in securing property at Matjiesrivier to form the Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve.

Hugh Taylor's definitive survey and classification of the vegetation of the Cederberg published as *Cederberg vegetation and flora*, a volume in the *Strelitzia* series of the National Botanical Institute is arguably his most

important contribution to understanding the montane vegetation of the Cape Floristic Region.

In 1990 Hugh and Dulcie retired to Froggy Pond, Simon's Town, a new suburb laid out on the farm of the same name which had belonged to the Taylor family. They took up residence in Dorrie's Drive, a road named after Hugh's mother! The circle was complete. But despite his retirement, Hugh found it hard to ignore his passion for the fynbos and the mountains. He travelled to Australia where he climbed in the Grampians in Victoria and then to New Zealand where he undertook a number of hiking trails with a long-standing friend. When at home, Hugh regularly walked on the Cape Peninsula Mountains and every so often in the Cederberg. His retirement allowed him more time for activities with the Botanical Society and Mountain Club of which he had an unbroken membership of over 50 years. He actively hacked alien vegetation on Red Hill above Simon' Town. Always interested in happenings around him, Hugh attended summer school courses at the University of Cape Town in his last years.

Hugh was a member of the following organizations: Botanical Society of South Africa, Dendrological Society, Endangered Wildlife Trust, International Association for Vegetation Science, Mountain Club of South Africa, South African Association of Botanists, South African Institute for Ecologists and Environmental Scientists, South African Institute for Forestry, and the Wildlife & Environment Society of South Africa.

Hugh collected about 12 000 well-documented plant specimens. Among these were a number of species new to botany and in many cases Hugh's records filled the

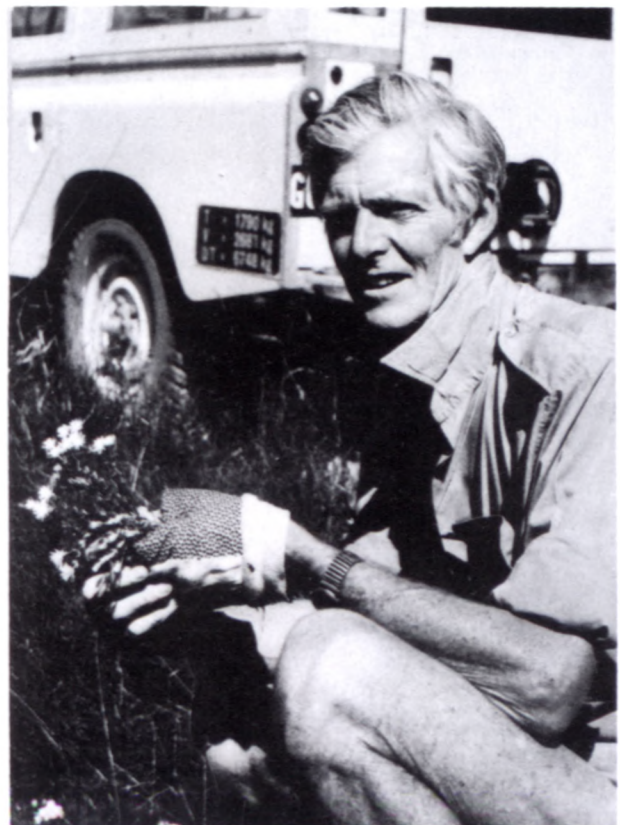


FIGURE 6.—Hugh Taylor in the Cederberg, 1983.

gaps in the distribution of many species. His collections formed an important part of the Stellenbosch Herbarium that was amalgamated with the Compton Herbarium, Kirstenbosch in 1996. Two species, a legume *Aspalathus taylorii* R.Dahlgren and a restio *Cannomois taylorii* H.P.Linder, commemorate Hugh's intimate involvement with the fynbos. His extensive collection of journals, reprints and original sets of data are housed in the Botany Department, University of Stellenbosch and his well-organized collection of colour slides is archived at the National Botanical Institute, Kirstenbosch.

Hugh contracted cancer that went undiagnosed for some time. He bravely fought the disease and looked forward to a recovery that was not to be. A little over a month before he took seriously ill, Hugh was up on the mountain at Red Hill, removing alien plants and walking amongst the fynbos that he dearly loved. While in hospital and in pain, with little hope of returning to an active life, Dulcie, Hugh's dear and compassionate wife, said to him that this would be the hardest mountain that he would ever have to climb, but that when he reached the top the view would be fantastic! Hugh died on the 6th July 1999 at Peers Village, Fish Hoek and a memorial service was held for him at St Francis Church, Simon's Town a week after his death.

Hugh Taylor will be fondly remembered by his family and many friends and acquaintances for his kind, caring nature and for being a true gentleman. He is survived by his wife Dulcie, daughters Jenny and Linden, Linden's husband Paul and three grandchildren.

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