

OBITUARIES

JOHN DENZIL CARR (1916–1997)

Denzil Carr (he seldom used his first given name, John) (Figure 1) was born in Germiston, Transvaal, on 12 November 1916. He read electrical engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand between 1936 and 1940, graduating B.Sc.Eng. He served as a bomber pilot with 21 Squadron SAAF, during World War II, whereafter he was transferred to SA Signals Corps. After the war, he lived in Sale, then part of Cheshire, now part of the southwestern fringe of Greater Manchester. It was at this time that he met Dorothy Ann Buxton, secretary of the local art society. After several years he returned to South Africa, and was then employed in the mining industry. Once he was established in a good position with Anglovaal Mining Corporation, he wrote to Dorothy offering her a job as his wife!—they were married on 13 August 1948.

When exactly the Carrs joined the Tree Society of southern Africa is not clear; Balkwill (1996) suggests 1949 or 1950; Dorothy was always adamant that it was 1954. However, the biography on the dust-jacket of his *Acacia* book (Carr 1976) suggests 1956. Seeing that the Society's records of that period have vanished, the correct date may never be known. Be that as it may, in due course the Carrs were absorbed into the running of the Society. Denzil was elected chairman, and Dorothy treasurer of the Society in 1965 (Rasmussen 1965). At that stage the Society's funds on hand amounted to the princely sum of 50c, but Dorothy took matters in hand and soon the financial situation was much healthier.

In 1976 Ken Cunliff, who had edited the Society's journal, *Trees in South Africa*, for many years, died, and Denzil took up that task as a matter of course. However, the two posts in the Society were too much for one person, so at the 1977 AGM he resigned the chairmanship. He continued to edit the journal until 1995, though with limited assistance from other members during the latter years. In 1994 he was elected President of the Society, but failing health compelled him to stand down from this office one year later.

Denzil's interest in trees was sparked off by a visit in his youth to the Lowveld, which at the time was largely unspoilt. Whatever he did was thoroughly done, and so he was not satisfied merely to attend Society outings and serve on a committee—he started to amass detailed practical information on growing trees from seed on his property in Morningside, Sandton, and he wrote articles on every aspect of an amateur's involvement with trees for the Society's journal. Only Ken Cunliff, with his quarterly column 'Trees for Tomorrow', was a more prolific writer. Denzil's field knowledge of trees also led to longer publications: *The South African Acacias*, Johannesburg 1976, and *Combretaceae in southern Africa*, Johannesburg 1988. His studies of tree propagation resulted in his last book, *The propagation and cultivation*

of indigenous trees and shrubs on the highveld, Sandton 1994. His *Acacia* and *Combretum* books, and many editions of *Trees in South Africa* are graced by his pencil drawings and photographs (Figure 2). Of his books, the first is now Africanana and not readily available, but the latter two are still in print.

He was also chairman of the Sandton Nature Conservation Society for several years from 1972. In 1993 the Botanical Society of South Africa awarded him the Marloth Medal for his work on *Acacia* and *Combretaceae*. This was only the third time this medal had been awarded since its inception in 1987. It is presented in recognition of the promotion of the indigenous flora of southern Africa by means of significant publications written by non-botanists. The name of the medal honours Rudolf Marloth (1855–1931), an analytical chemist and botanist who wrote the beautifully illustrated multi-volume *Flora of South Africa*.

Denzil's last years became an increasing burden to him since failing health took its toll, first on his mobility and then on his other faculties. He died at his son Richard's home at Tygerpoort, east of Pretoria on 29 August 1997, during the early hours of the morning. He leaves two sons and two grandchildren.

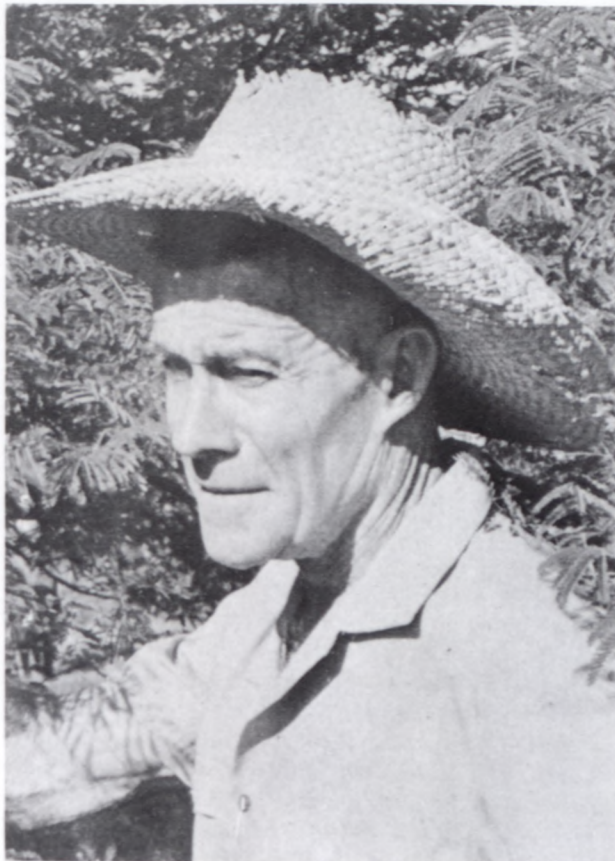


FIGURE 1.—John Denzil Carr (1916–1997).

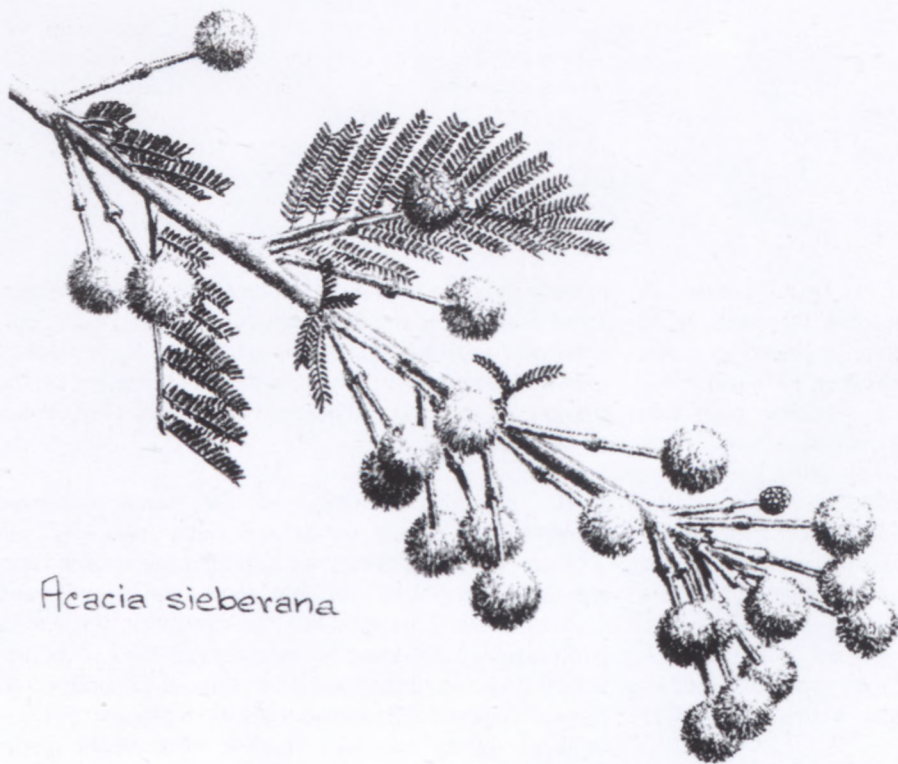


FIGURE 2.—Flowering branch of *Acacia sieberana*, drawn by Denzil Carr in his book, *The South African Acacias* (1976).

REFERENCES

- BALKWILL, K. 1996. Dorothy Carr (1914–1996)—a tribute. *Trees in South Africa* 46: 32, 33.
- CARR, J.D. 1976. *The South African Acacias*. Conservation Press, Johannesburg.

- RASMUSSEN, M. 1965. The eighteenth annual general meeting of the Society. *Trees in South Africa* 16: 86–90.