

MARY ELIZABETH CONNELL (1917–1997)

'Betty' Connell was born in York, England, on 26th March 1917 (Figures 5 & 6). Her initial education was at York College for Girls. Even at this early stage she showed evidence of considerable artistic talent—a talent which was actively nurtured by her parents. While at school she entered for the Royal College of Art Masters examinations and obtained honours on two occasions: in 1932 for Drawing from Nature Forms and 1933 for Pictorial Representation.

The Connell family emigrated to South Africa in 1933. After matriculating at Barnato Park in Berea, she enrolled at the Johannesburg School of Art with the intention of becoming an art teacher. During her second year, in 1936, a post of botanical artist at the National Herbarium in Pretoria under Dr Pole Evans became vacant. She applied and was successful.

Her first work at the Herbarium involved the production of large plates of poisonous plants and noxious weeds which were published in *Farming in South Africa*. At that time Cythna Letty, doyenne of South African botanical artists, was the only other artist at the Herbarium and under her tutelage Betty Connell began to produce a series of plates for *Flowering Plants of Africa*. In all, 121 of her plates were published in that work. Among these plates was one she painted for me, namely that of *Cyrtanthus erubescens*, a beautiful and very rare new species from the Natal Drakensberg (Killick 1965). A print of this plate, delicately executed and one of my

favourite *FPA* plates (Figure 7), adorns my study wall at home and is much admired by all.



FIGURE 5.—Mary Elizabeth Connell (1917–1997).



FIGURE 6.—Betty Connell working on one of her paintings.

Apart from her contributions to *Flowering Plants of Africa*, she contributed to important works such as, White, Dyer & Sloane's *The succulent Euphorbieae (southern Africa)* (1941) and Meredith's *The grasses and pastures of South Africa* (1955) and *Flora of southern Africa*. In addition to botanical drawings and paintings, she undertook private work, mostly landscapes.

In 1942 she married Dr Niko Stutterheim, former Vice-President of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and chairman of the Witwatersrand University Council, and raised a family of four sons and one daughter.

She returned to the National Herbarium for two years, 1958–1960 and was responsible for 83 of the black and white drawings of weeds in Henderson & Anderson's *Common weeds in South Africa* (1966), an updated and enlarged version of Phillips's *Weeds of South Africa* (1939) to which she had also contributed. After 1960 she did freelance work for the Herbarium.

We mourn the passing in July 1997 of an accomplished artist, who contributed much to South African botany.

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