

LUCY KATHLEEN ARMITAGE CHIPPINDALL (1913–1992)

Born in Pretoria on the 15th February 1913, Lucy Chippindall (Figure 2) attended St Mary's Diocesan School, Pretoria, from 1919 to 1929. During this time she developed her interest in biology, in particular bird-watching and botany.

Initially employed as a shop assistant in Pretoria, she soon moved to the Division of Botany in 1931, where she was employed as an herbarium technician mounting grass specimens. With the assistance of Dr Dyer, Lucy Chippindall learned to use taxonomic keys to identify grasses. Much of her time was subsequently spent answering queries concerning the identity of pasture grasses. Perceiving a need for a guide to the grasses of southern Africa, she began planning a taxonomic treatment which, when finally published in 1955, was to see service for the next 35 years.

During the Second World War the demands placed on the National Herbarium in Pretoria increased, as botanists in central and southern Africa could not send material to the European herbaria for identification. As a result, Lucy identified a large number of African grass specimens and greatly extended her knowledge of the grasses. Because of this work, she was able to identify and describe several new grass species (Chippindall 1946a). In addition to these taxonomic descriptions, she also published a paper on seed dispersal in the grasses (1946b).

In 1946, Lucy Chippindall left the Division of Botany and spent three years at the University of the Witwatersrand, graduating in 1948 with a B.Sc. in botany.

After marrying Paddy Crook, she moved to Melsetter, in what is now Zimbabwe, where Paddy was employed



FIGURE 2.—Lucy Kathleen Armitage Chippindall (1913–1992)

as an agricultural extension officer. It was in Melsetter that she continued her work towards a treatise on southern African grasses. This, her major work, was the culmination of her efforts initiated in the 1940's. The text, titled *A guide to the identification of grasses in South Africa*, was formalised at the request of the Board of Trustees of the book *The grasses and pastures of South Africa*, edited by D. Meredith.

This book has been described as a classical contribution to the literature on pasture science in the subcontinent. Lucy Chippindall's contribution formed the major component of this important reference work, incorporating taxonomic keys to genera and species, descriptions, illustrations by (among others) Cythna Letty and Gertrude

Laurence, and distribution maps based on the data gathered by John Acocks. Despite other texts that have appeared subsequently, this work will remain in use by farmers, researchers and conservationists for many years to come. It has also become a valuable piece of Africana and is sought after by book collectors.

During the 1950's and 1960's, the Crooks lived in Salisbury (now Harare) and Umtali (now Mutare). During this time Lucy was employed in the Government Herbarium in Salisbury. There, with the help of her husband, she began to prepare other manuscripts on southern African grasses. These were published as three volumes of pamphlets, and dealt with 240 southern African grasses (Chippindall & Crook 1976–1978). These pamphlets were intended to provide the layman with a means to identify the more common grass species. Each pamphlet deals with a single species, providing illustrations, distribution data (in Africa south of the equator) and habitat data. In addition, common names, descriptions and notes on the economic value are also provided.

Around 1978 the Crooks moved to Cape Town, where Lucy continued her work on the grasses in the Bolus Herbarium of the University of Cape Town. During this period, her interaction with students and staff stimulated an interest in the unusual grass flora of the fynbos, a subject that has continued to receive the attention of the researchers at the University of Cape Town.

During her career she collected more than 2 000 herbarium specimens, the majority of which are housed in SRGH, PRE and BOL. In January 1989 she was awarded the Senior Medal for Botany of the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB). In 1990 she was made an honorary member of the Grassland Society of southern Africa.

She is commemorated in the species *Pentaschistis chippindalliae* Linder (Linder & Ellis 1990), and the latest work on southern African grasses (Gibbs Russell *et al.* 1990) is dedicated to her in recognition of her efforts in the field of grass systematics.

Her passing on the 4th April 1992, marks the end of an era, an era in which Lucy Chippindall provided a solid, enduring foundation in what were then the young and exciting fields of pasture science and grass taxonomy.

PUBLICATIONS OF LUCY CHIPPINDALL

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