

ROSEMARY CHARLOTTE HOLCROFT (1942–2000)

Rosemary Holcroft (nee Temperley) (Figure 5) was born in Nairobi Kenya, on 12 December 1942. Her father, Dr B.N. Temperley, was a geologist working in Tanzania. After two years the family returned to England, but being fed up with the vagaries of the English weather and the post war situation in the country, the family returned to East Africa, this time to Kenya. Rosemary completed her schooling at Msongari Loreto Convent in Nairobi. From an early age her parents instilled in her a love of nature and taught her to draw.

In 1960 Rosemary left Kenya and enrolled at the University of Cape Town Ballet School under the direction of Dulcie Howes, where she obtained a Diploma in Dance Teaching in 1963. She taught ballet for seven years having her own studios, first in Pretoria and then in Cape Town. In 1964 she married Michael Roos, a well-known artist. Her son, Marc, was born in 1972. While in Cape Town her interest in botanical illustration first manifested itself: in 1965 she prepared a set of pen and ink illustrations of ferns for Professor E.A.C.L.E. Schelpe of the University of Cape Town.

Rosemary moved to Pretoria in 1972 and lived with her parents who had settled there after her father's retirement. After seeing the Botanical Research Institute's exhibition of botanical art at the Pretoria Art Museum, in August 1973, Rosemary became inspired to enroll for a B.A. (Fine Arts) course at the University of South Africa, which unfortunately she did not complete. In 1974 she participated in a group exhibition of botanical illustrations held at the Association of South African Arts gallery in Pretoria on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Cythna Letty, doyenne of South African botanical artists. In the same year she exhibited at the Creative Arts exhibition and the annual central show of the South African Aloe and Succulent Society.

In 1975 Rosemary joined the Botanical Research Institute as a temporary half-day Senior Technician and this was the beginning of a 10-year stint as a highly competent and productive botanical artist. She contributed to most of the Institute's publications including 100 plates for *The Flowering Plants of Africa*, 67 of which have been published, plus 150 plates for the *Flora of Pretoria*, which has yet to be published. She also contributed to several external publications such as the *Cactus and Succulent Journal* (of the USA). In 1976 she married for a second time, this time to Leslie Holcroft, a computer consultant.

In 1980 I decided to write a *Field guide to the flora of the Natal Drakensberg* (published in 1990) and for this I needed 48 plates illustrating over 200 species (Figure 6). I enlisted the help of Rosemary who did the drawings whenever she had time to spare. To obtain material for illustrations we visited the Berg on two occasions. The second trip was written up by Rosemary in *Veld & Flora* (December 1985) in an article entitled 'A birthday to remember'. The first two paragraphs illustrate vividly Rosemary's intense love of nature which so markedly influenced her work. The paragraphs read as follows:

'It was December 12, 1984 and I thought how lucky I was to be listening to such a scintillating symphony on my birthday. I was sitting in the veld beside a tributary that fed into the main river of the Ndedema Gorge, about 1 800 m above sea level in the Cathedral Peak area of the Natal Drakensberg. The gurgle of water running over and between smooth pebbles, the rush of water over slabs of rocks and the splash of water over the edge and into rock pools, made a harmony of sound punctuated by the melodies of birds singing in the bushes and trees above the mountain stream.

The sky was clear and the air was cool, with a gentle breeze occasionally blowing the grass and veld flowers surrounding me in the foreground. The steep slopes of the gorge, the dark patches of forests, the rounded spurs forming the Little Berg and the massive blocks of basalt that formed the jagged skyline of the Dragon Mountains were quiet and still. The perfect silhouette of Monk's Cowl, Cathkin Peak and Champagne Castle reminded me of a previous visit to this land of ponderous awe and wonder'.

Rosemary resigned from the Institute in 1985 largely due to ill health—possibly the incipient stages of Crohn's Disease which afflicted her later. Shortly afterwards she purchased a Toyota Hilux 4 × 4 vehicle in which she travelled to Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and other places, taking photographs and writing articles for magazines. She described this period of ten years as 'the most creative and fulfilling of her life'. Apart from travel,



FIGURE 5.—Rosemary Charlotte Holcroft (1942–2000).



FIGURE 6.—One of the line drawings done by Rosemary on p. 97 of the book by D.J.B. Killick entitled, *A field guide to the flora of the Natal Drakensberg* (1990).

Rosemary did a certain amount of free-lance art work. She and Les were divorced in 1985.

In 1988 Rosemary worked at Optima, the South African Council for the Blind in Pretoria as hostel supervisor. In 1994 after five operations due to Crohn's Disease she was medically boarded from work and put on a disability pension. She then bought a cottage at Southport on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast near Port Shepstone and stayed there until she died on 4 February

2000. A memorial service for Rosemary was held in the Botanical Garden of the National Botanical Institute, Pretoria, on 7 March and was attended by relatives, friends and former colleagues. And so we took leave of an accomplished botanical artist and a good friend.

D.J.B. KILLICK

465 Sappers Contour, Lynnwood, 0081 Pretoria.