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Board of the
Botanic Gardens and
State Herbarium



JOHN CARRICK, B.Sc. (Hons.), F.L.S.

On 14th June, 1914, John Carrick was born in Glasgow, Scotland, the youngest of three sons of John and Isabella. His Bachelor of Science (with First Class Honours in Botany) was awarded by Glasgow University in 1938, the year before the outbreak of the War. Until 1940, John undertook post-graduate research in Mycology, but then joined up and between 1940 and 1946 saw service as a Radar Officer in Britain, India, and Burma. This period not only provided an introduction to the Asian continent in which he was later to spend many profitable years, but also kindled an interest in the spiritual life of some of the peoples — he retained an interest in Tibetan Buddhists throughout his life.

In 1941, John married Nan Galbraith. When they went to Singapore in 1952, she contacted polio and could no longer walk unaided. For 25 years John devoted himself to giving Nan the best in life that was possible with this limitation.

After the war, he went for five years to the University of Manitoba, where he lectured principally in Mycology and Plant Pathology. From 1952 to 1967 John again lived in Asia, occupying several posts; as Lecturer, principally in Plant Physiology at the University of Malaya (Singapore), 1952-59; Senior Lecturer in Botany at the University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur), where his research interest was centred on soils and origin of Kerangas (heath forest) vegetation in Sarawak and including a period as Head of the Department (1959-65); and as Colombo Plan Field Pharmacognocist attached to the University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur), working on an organic phytochemistry survey of Malaya and training local personnel, 1965-67. While still in Singapore, John was involved in the planning of the Botany Department in Kuala Lumpur and transferred to the new Department when the first class was being taught in temporary accommodation. He played a significant part in designing courses and recruiting staff. Duncan Poore, a colleague of John's, at that time, writes that "His thoroughness and good humour made him an invaluable member of the Department and his cheerfulness, patience and humanity made him a friend of all the students who came in contact with him".

Another colleague of the Malaysian period was Kwiton Jong, whose memories of John echo those of Dr Poore; his sense of humour, the enthusiasm and love of botany with which he infused his students and, he adds, "his facility in the Malay language which also endeared him to the local people".

In 1968, John took up a post as Botanist at the State Herbarium of South Australia. While routine responsibilities took up the major part of his time, including spells when he acted as Head of the Herbarium, he did also participate in floristic surveys, the largest of these being the survey of the site of a proposed town at Monarto, and in taxonomic research. While a revision of the Prostantheroideae (Labiatae) was his principal research interest, he did find time to describe a new species of *Grevillea* (Proteaceae) and to complete a large part of the review of the South Australian species of *Melaleuca* (Myrtaceae) accompanying this account of his life. The revision of the Prostantheroideae produced two papers, each on a minor genus, one of which was new to science, but had not advanced sufficiently far for his notes to yield any further publications.

In 1970/71, John was Australian Botanical Liaison Officer at Kew, and in 1972 was elected to Council of the Royal Society of South Australia, serving as Programme Secretary until 1974.

During the last couple of years of his life, John suffered increasingly frequent spells of ill health, but, when his death came on 4th January, 1978, it was totally unexpected. He is survived by his wife, Nan, daughter, Anne, and son, Ian.



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His character, as it will be remembered by his colleagues in Australia, was well summed up in an obituary in the 'Newsletter of the Australian Systematic Botany Society', "John's advice was frequently sought and freely given on many botanical problems, especially with Latin translations and as the Herbarium authority to whom to turn for a ruling on English. He was quiet and reserved, very loyal to his family, friends and colleagues, and had a ready sense of humour based much on puns and plays on words. The literary side of his interests was not widely appreciated; he was not only fond of poetry, particularly that of Burns and Shelley, but was no mean poet himself".

John was a scholar, proficient in the use of English and botanical Latin, and interested in literature, music and the theatre. He wrote a number of poems, of which this tribute to his English schoolmaster is now sadly appropriate for John himself:

In Memoriam, D.A. — 14 February 1938

Our birth, a mighty flush of red and gold,
Dawns through time's chaos and eternity;
Our noon, in an unfathomed brilliancy,
Shapes youth's keen courage in a sterner mould;
Our eventide, whose lingering shadows fold
In softer radiance and mystery
Our night, moves swiftly out o'er life's broad sea
When the lone evening star shines clear and cold.
Why do we weep? There is no sting in death.
His thoughts live on though he has passed away.

His memory, embalmed in heaven's breath,
Chides our dull sorrow — he would have us gay.

Ths storms within our wounded hearts subside.
We recollect his love for us — with pride.

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