

## Obituary

JOCELYN MARY LEWIS RUSSELL  
(1905–1992)

Jocelyn Russell, the able, lively and lovable personality, died on 14 May 1992, aged 86. She was born at Ockham, Surrey, on 28 December 1905, the only child of Walter Lewis Castelden and Charlotte Mary Katherine, née Thring, who died very shortly after. So, Jocelyn was brought up until she was four by a sister of her father – who came from Canterbury and managed Henderson's Transvaal Estates. By his second marriage he had four children, to the youngest of whom, Mrs Joanna Huntingford, I am greatly indebted for many details. He died in 1953.

From 1921 to 1923 Jocelyn was sent to the Godolphin School at Salisbury, where her contemporary was another enthusiastic botanist, the late Mrs Barbara Garratt. This was followed by an art school and work in her father's office. On 1 January 1935, she married Basil Henry Sackville Russell and they lived in Manchester, Portugal (1937) and the Belgian Congo (where he was employed by Vacuum Oil), before returning to England at the outbreak of World War II. Basil, later a Squadron-Leader, joined the R.A.F.V.R. and Jocelyn the Mechanised Transport Corps.

After the collapse of France, her unit was drafted to the Middle East, joining in January 1941, at Cairo, the Free French Forces with the British 8th Army. As those will know who saw the television programme on 29 March 1989 (filmed 18 months before) "Tin Hats and Silk Stockings", she also painted wild flowers when she was out there. Some 40 of these, dating from 1941 to 1944, with names and localities, were on show at the Centenary Exhibition at Kew in 1953, who said they made a very fine display and asked if they could eventually be returned there. Many were made at Bir Hukayyim, where the battle raged for a fortnight in 1942. She made a notebook (which was shown on the TV programme) grouped by families, of 115 of the plants she saw during the time before she got to Tunis. For each she wrote out a full and detailed account with a clear, characteristic coloured drawing. This material has also gone to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Her arduous tour lasted four years and three months, from Syria to Tunis, then into Italy and southern France; and her stalwart service was rewarded on 19 July 1944, with the French Colonial Medal with clasp 'Libye' and on 20 June 1945 with the clasp 'Tunisie', and on 16 April 1947 with the Croix de Guerre avec étoile en bronze. The citation included "A participé à toutes les campagnes, faisant des liaisons aux postes avancés. A notamment assuré dans les combats de Tobrouck, le ravitaillement en eau de la formation, malgré les mitraillages et les bombardements de l'aviation ennemie, a continué ces missions de liaison avec la même succès et la même intrépidité"; and on 27 July 1947 the Commemorative Medal of the Free French Forces.

While she was in Tobruk, she learnt that her husband, dropped by parachute from a flying boat in Sumatra in 1942, shortly after meeting her in Cairo, was missing, presumed killed. Meanwhile, she had met Constance Spry, the flower arranger, who appeared one day in her tent in Africa and offered her a job after the war. This developed into a close friendship, Jocelyn travelling widely in her Rednose cars, demonstrating the art. She even did Prince Philip's private bouquet for Princess Elizabeth on their wedding day, which she delivered personally in her Morris 8 to Buckingham Palace.

Although she had been keen on flowers ever since she was a child, she learnt of the Wild Flower Society only by chance when she was 43. She joined the B.S.B.I. the following year, 1950, and the London Natural History Society in 1951. Thereafter these led her dominant interest in wild flowers, she contributing every bit as much as she learnt, sending records to various Floras and the like. Not surprisingly she rapidly took a leading part. For our Society she gave long service to the Meetings Committee (1953–70), the Conservation Committee (1964–78) and the Council. She was a Vice-President from 1976 to 1980. For the Wild Flower Society she held various posts, not the least being her founding, in 1957 of the Branch 'Parnassus', the highest refuge for top members, running it until 1986.

Two of her discoveries were *Dichondra micrantha* in 1955, naturalised near Hayle in Cornwall



FIGURE 1. The design for the front cover of the *Wild Flower Magazine* drawn by Jocelyn Russell in 1959.

and new to the British Isles; and while in Jersey she realised what none of us had, why *Ranunculus paludosus* was so called, when it was always seen in flower in dry places. She showed that its habitat had to be wet in winter.

In 1959 there was a competition for a design for the front cover of the *Wild Flower Magazine*, and her garland with a flower for each month was the outstanding entry (Fig. 1). Since then it has also been used on the front cover of the *Wild Flower Diaries*, the *Compliments Slips*, and even the *Car Sticker*. In 1961 appeared R. W. Butcher's *New Illustrated British Flora*, for which Jocelyn did many of the plates, Dr Butcher describing them to her as "beautiful", and to me as "very good". She left numerous delicate and delightful coloured drawings of flowers (garden ones too) from the countries she visited. Those with European flowers have been gifted to the Natural History Museum; those from North and South Africa to Kew. She had coloured in exquisitely, and with date and place, every possible species in the *Illustrations* to Bentham & Hooker's *Flora* and most of those in Dr R. W. Butcher and F. Strudwick's *Further Illustrations of British Plants*. These are kept, as the treasures they are, by her family. They were kindly lent in November 1992, along with a sample of her drawings, and shown at the A.G.M. and Tea Party of the *Wild Flower Society*; and also a fortnight later at our own Exhibition meeting.

Among the papers of this eager searcher are her notebooks from 1951 to 1968, detailing where to find all manner of scarce, rare and very rare plants (and she had seen the rarest of plants, including *Epipogium aphyllum* quite soon after it was rediscovered). There are others with copious notes on what she found on her trips, often with itineraries which are now in the Natural History Museum. These drawings and photographs show that she botanised at least in Scotland (1950–55, 1958, 1968, 1974–5); Wales (1952, 1954, 1956–7, 1968); Ireland (1952, 1954, 1958, 1967); Jersey (1954, 1956–7); Guernsey (1956–7); Alderney (1956); Herm (1958); France (1946, 1950, 1958, 1963–5); Andorra and Pyrenees (1963); Portugal (1968); Italy (1944–5, 1963–66, 1972); Austria (1964); Switzerland (1964–8); Norway (1963); Greece; Turkey (1976); and South Africa (1969). She was in touch with, and often close friends of, many of the leading botanists' professional and amateur.

She was a skilful photographer, the evidence being in box after box, at least ten of them filled with  $2 \times 2$  slides, these going similarly to the Natural History Museum and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Bald facts such as all these give no impression of the warm, exuberant, cheerful companion she was, with infectious enthusiasm. What a lot of good she did to, and for, many of us. There are accounts of her in the *Wild Flower Magazine* Nos. 341, for September 1954, 407 for Autumn 1986 and 425 for Autumn 1992.

D. McCLINTOCK