

Bryan H B S Womersley (1922 – 2011)

With sadness, we must report the death of Professor Emeritus, Dr. Hugh Bryan Spencer Womersley (Bryan) (19 November 1922 - 16 January 2011), author of the monumental six volume work *Marine Benthic Flora of Southern Australia* (1984-2003), and over 80 substantial publications (1946-2010) dealing with the systematics and ecology of southern Australian marine algae. It is a remarkable testament to Bryan's focus and drive that one man could have achieved such a volume of work, much of it groundbreaking.

Born in England, he arrived in Perth with his family in 1930, relocated to Adelaide in 1933 and began his research on the marine benthic flora of southern Australia in 1945 as a Masters student with Professor J.G. Wood, with an early focus on the marine flora of Kangaroo Island. Bryan spent his entire career at The University of Adelaide, teaching, and providing a mentoring role for many students and researchers, retiring in 1987 as D.Sc. and Emeritus Professor of Botany. In 1989 Bryan became an Honorary Research Associate of the State Herbarium of South Australia. His vast and comprehensive marine botany collection was transferred to the State Herbarium at the same time. During 22 years in this capacity he completed the final four books (Volumes 3 A-D) of the *Marine Benthic Flora of Southern Australia*.

Bryan received a number of prestigious awards for his work: Edgeworth David Medal, Royal Society of NSW 1955; Verco Medal, Royal Society of SA 1969; Fellow, Australian Academy of Sciences 1977; Clarke Medal, Royal Society of NSW 1985; Prescott Award, Phycological Society of America 1985 & 1999; Mueller Medal, Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science 1986; Centenary Medal 2003; SA Great Award for Environmental Science 2004; Australian Marine Sciences Association Silver Jubilee Award 1994.



A 75th birthday tribute (including portrait) appeared in 1998 in *Botanica Marina* 41: 1-5, a portrait and brief biographical information appeared on p. 176 in an article (*Phycologia* 40: 172-181) honouring the Presidents of the International Phycological Society from 1961-2001 and in *Botanica Marina* Vol. 52, 193-4 (2009).

Bryan served on a variety of scientific advisory committees including the Board of Governors

of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens from 1961-1992, Council President, International Phycological Society 1970; Foundation president of the Australasian Society for Phycology and Aquatic Botany, 1980-1982. His legacy is his publications and collections that provide a basis for marine algal research for decades to come and the widespread effect he has had on research, researchers and collaborators internationally.

Moreover, his advocacy for the importance of ongoing phycological research and documentation has encouraged the establishment of a Marine Botanist position at the State Herbarium, jointly with the University of Adelaide and SARDI, vitalising Phycology and expanding the numbers of staff, honoraries and students in the unit.

He is commemorated in the "HBS Womersley Chair in Systematic Botany", a new Professorial position as the Chief Botanist of the State Herbarium of SA, jointly with the DENR and the University of Adelaide.

Bryan is survived by his wife, Alleyne, and sons Robert and Peter.

Bob Baldock



Photo: Matt Harvey