

OBITUARY: MERWYNNE TWENTYMAN JONES

by Heather Howard



Merwynne Twentyman Jones

One of this area's most enthusiastic amateur genealogists and historians was lost to us when Merwynne Twentyman Jones died peacefully at Damant Lodge on 10 February 2021, aged 85.

Merwynne grew up in Grahamstown where she studied secretarial work, drama and writing. Her first job was with the SABC in Grahamstown, writing and broadcasting for some years, before marrying Sydney Twentyman Jones of the farm Delamere, becoming a busy farmer's wife and the mother of three children.

Her lifelong interest in genealogy started with Sydney's family tree and widened over the years until she became very knowledgeable and was a help to many people tracking their family histories.

Her interest in the history of this area took many turns. She and Sydney were active members of the LAHS for many years and she served as Chairman of the Society 1998-2003 and as Secretary 2005-7. She was also representative on the Board for ECHO and the SA Heritage Resources Agency. Her well-researched articles in the Toposcope Journal over a long period covered many diverse subjects like "Slagter's Nek Rebellion", "Clocks and Watches in the Afrikaner Museum", "Dunk, the Seafield Hippo", "LAHS visit to Historic Reed Fountain", "History of the Great Fish River Mouth" and many others. She also took a great interest in the Kowie Museum from the time of its inception in 1983.

Merwynne and Sydney helped maintain the historic Cuylerville Church and cemetery, and at one time motivated and helped build a Catholic Church in Station Hill. Later they helped at St John's in Bathurst and were involved with the upgrading of Bradshaw's Mill,

Merwynne taking Bathurst group tours for a time, which she advertised at Bathurst Shows in her eye-catching 1820 costume. She was also an announcer at the Shows, and helped organise and promote the Bathurst Agricultural Museum.

Merwynne was best known as our Town Librarian for nearly 30 years, both in the old library at the water's edge (where she was very concerned about the river dampness affecting the books) and later in the new Town Library near the Civic Centre, a development she strongly promoted and fought for. Here she continued studying and qualified in librarianship and computer science through UNISA.

In the Library she reigned supreme, ever-helpful to both casual readers and students, hosting the PA Art Club's annual display, and encouraging film shows of all kinds. She also entertained young children on Saturday mornings with story-telling and inaugurated a library service for Damant Lodge residents – in fact she was the “Compleat Librarian”. Sydney died in 2005, and later she lost her son Graham. She is survived by two daughters, Vanessa in Grahamstown, and Alyson in Sydney Australia, her sons-in-law and three grandchildren.
