

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE0206

Burbidge, Nancy Tyson

(1912 - 1977)

Born	5 August, 1912, Cleckheaton Yorkshire England
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Died	4 March, 1977, Canberra Australian Capital Territory
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Occupation	Botanist, Conservationist
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Summary

Nancy Burbidge worked at the CSIRO between 1946-1973, rising from systematic botanist to Curator of the Herbarium. From 1973 to 1977 she was scientific leader of the *Flora of Australia* project. Burbidge published several books on Australian plants.

Details

Nancy Burbidge emigrated to Australia with her parents in 1913, and was educated at Katanning (Kobeelya) Church of England Girls' School (founded by her mother Nancy Eleanor in 1922), Bunbury High School and the University of Western Australia. She obtained her Bachelor of Science (BSc) in 1937, Master of Science (MSc) in 1975, and Doctor of Science (DSc) in 1961.

Upon graduating in 1937, Burbidge was awarded the prize of a free passage to England by a group of shipping companies. She spent eighteen months there at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew.

In 1943 Burbidge was appointed assistant agronomist at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute in Adelaide, where she started working on the regeneration of native pastures in the arid and semi-arid regions of South Australia. Burbidge was appointed to the new position of systematic botanist in the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry, Canberra, in 1946. Before taking a year's secondment in 1953 to be Australian botanical liaison officer back at the Kew herbarium, London, Burbidge was editing the *Australasian Herbarium News* and was secretary of the systematic botany committee of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (1948-1952).

Burbidge published several books on Australian plants and illustrated many with her own drawings. In 1960 she was a founding member of the National Parks Association of the ACT (going on to be twice president, secretary, and a committee member for eleven years), and was prominent in lobbying for the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park. She was also a member of the Australian Federation of University Women (president of the Canberra association 1959-1961), and the Pan-Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association (president 1957-1958 and international secretary 1961-1968).

Burbidge was awarded the 1971 Clarke medal for her achievements in taxonomic botany and ecology by the Royal Society of New South Wales. She is commemorated by an altar-frontal showing banksias and honey-eaters in St Michael's Anglican Church, Mount Pleasant, Perth, and by the Nancy T. Burbidge Memorial, an amphitheatre in the National Botanic Gardens, Canberra.

Published resources

Resource Section

Burbidge, Nancy Tyson (1912 - 1977), Biographical Entry, 2002,
<http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs/P002283b.htm>

Nancy Tyson Burbidge, Australian National Botanic Gardens,
<http://www.anbg.gov.au/people/burbidge.nancy.html>

Burbidge, Nancy Tyson (1912-1977), Chippendale, George M., 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A130336b.htm>

Journal Article

The phytogeography of Australia, Burbidge, N., 1960

Book Section

Nancy Burbidge - biographical details, Stewart, Noel, 1987

Book

Australian Grasses, Burbidge, Nancy T., 1966-1970

Dictionary of Australian Plant Genera: Gymnosperms and Angiosperms, Burbidge, Nancy T., [1963]

Flora of the Australian Capital Territory, Burbidge, Nancy T. and Gray, Max, 1970

The Wattles of the Australian Capital Territory, Burbidge, Nancy T., [1961]

History of systematic botany in Australasia, Short, P. S. (ed.)

Report

Select list of publications in systematic botany available in Australia, Burbidge, Nancy T (comp.), 1951

Resource

Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003,
<http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

Author Details

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