

Obituary

Jacqueline Nancy Mary Adams CBE, QSO

19 May 1926 – 27 March 2007



Photo courtesy of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Nancy Adams followed in the great tradition of women botanical artists. She was born in Levin in 1926 and educated at Wellington Girls' College and Victoria University of Wellington where she studied

botany and zoology. When she was 16 she joined Botany Division, DSIR and remained there until 1959 when she was appointed to the National Museum as assistant Curator of Botany with a special responsibility for algae, retiring in 1987 but continuing as an Honorary Research Associate of the Museum. She developed the museum's algal collection and this work came to fruition with the publication in 1994 of *Seaweeds of New Zealand: An illustrated guide*. This was the publication of which she was proudest and it showed both her botanical knowledge and her marvellous skill in depicting plants. Algae are a real challenge to any artist but her delicate and detailed algal illustrations are as good as any ever published and brought her international recognition.

They illustrate her conviction that a drawing can show much more than a photograph, "In a drawing, someone has thought it through and interpreted the plant for you, so it's more informative" (*New Zealand Listener*, 191 (3312), 1 November 2003).

Seaweeds of New Zealand was her masterpiece winning the Montana Book Award in 1995 for book production. She is better known to the general reader for her illustrations in Poole and Adams *Trees and shrubs of New Zealand* used by generations of New Zealand naturalists – both amateur and professional. This was first published in 1963 but has gone through many editions with her drawings greatly assisting ready identification. The quality of the printing varies between editions,

but the best reproductions show the simplicity, economy of line and true understated elegance typical of her work. In all, she prepared illustrations for nearly 40 publications and her work was displayed around New Zealand in a major travelling exhibition between 2003 and 2006.

Miss Adams was honoured for her botanical and artistic achievements. She was awarded the Loder Cup in 1964, was appointed QSO in 1989, received the New Zealand 1990 Medal, and was appointed CBE in 1995. She presented the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Banks Memorial Lecture in 1985, speaking on New Zealand botanical art.

Obituary compiled by Ross Ferguson; FergusonR@rnzih.org.nz

Other obituaries for Nancy Adams have been published in *The New Zealand Herald* (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=218&objectid=10431737) and on the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network website (http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/news_events/news01.asp?newsid=150).