

## Elizabeth Mary Campbell 1940-2008

TWIDALE, C. R., BOURNE, J. A., and VIDAL ROMANÍ, J. R.



Fig. 1. A youthful Liz in Canberra, 1963.

### Biographical details

Elizabeth Mary Corbin was born on 9 April 1940, and grew up on the family sheep property at Binnum near Naracoorte, in the South East district of South Australia. As a young girl, Liz helped on the farm, and her country background later served her well when she took to field work. She was educated locally, and then at Woodlands Church of England Girls Grammar School, Glenelg. There she became joint Head Prefect and many of her attitudes and values were either gained or confirmed by her contact with the formidable and admirable Principal, Miss Millington. She entered the University of Adelaide on a Commonwealth Scholarship in 1959. She would have liked to study Medicine but her school subjects did not at that time qualify her for such a course. Instead, and after a first year settling in and finding her feet, she majored in Geography and French, and went on to Honours in Geography (1962). Throughout her undergraduate years Liz lived in St Ann's, at the time the only ladies' residential college. She became President of the College Club in 1962, her last in residence, and in the same year was awarded the Collegians Prize.

After working for a year with the Department of National Development in Canberra (figure 1), Liz returned to Adelaide in 1964. She married Dean Campbell, with whom in due course she had two daughters, Jacqueline and Robyn. She was appointed to a tutorship in the Department of Geography, University of Adelaide. She studied for an M.A., which was duly awarded in May 1968. In between having and caring for her girls Liz took part-time positions, e.g. with the Australian Heritage Commission, but also tutoring and demonstrating in the University.

In 1981 she returned as part-time research assistant and associate, and part-time lecturer and tutor for the Department of Geography. In 1990 an opening as full-time Research Assistant and Associate occurred, working with C.R. Twidale under the auspices

of ARC grants. Several productive years followed during which time Liz co-authored several papers, travelled widely in Australia (Hamersley Ranges, Darwin, Alice Springs, Townsville, Hobart) and also ventured overseas for the first, but not the last, time, to Spain, France, and Switzerland, and to Malaysia and Singapore (figure 2). Concurrently with this research-oriented work she continued to lecture, tutor and demonstrate. When the grants ran out she applied for and was granted a Commonwealth Graduate Scholarship that enabled her to work for a Ph.D. (figure 3).

At that time, in the mid and late 'eighties, the physical aspects of Geography were being marginalised in the Department of Geography, and acting on the recommendations of the 1982 (Bowie) Review of Earth

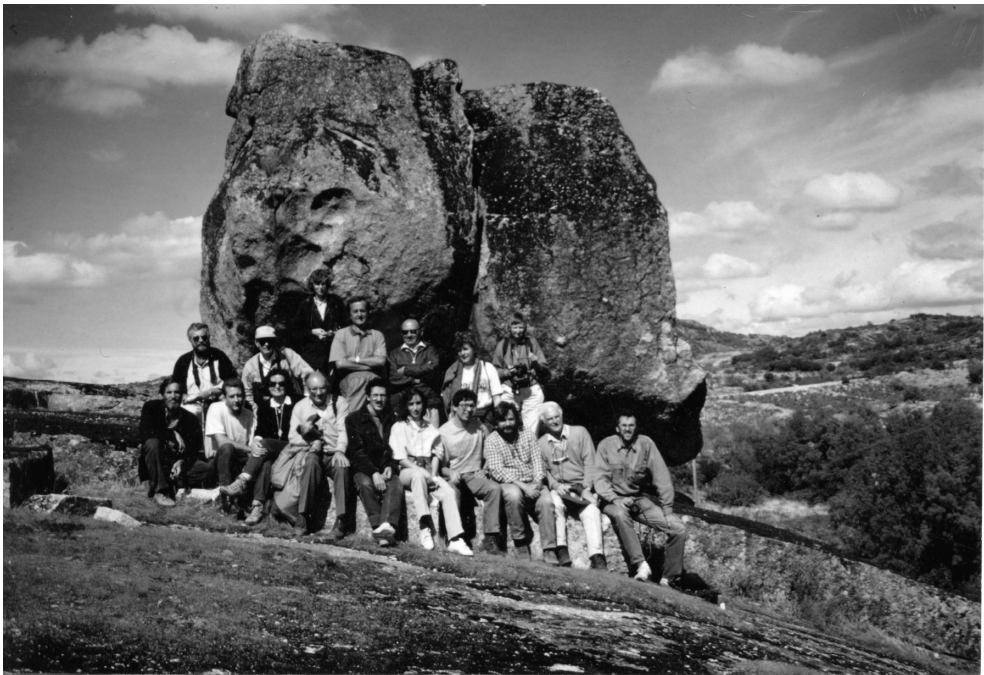


Fig. 2. In the field in the granitic Sierra Guadarrama, central Spain, 1991. Liz, far right, back row.



Fig. 3. Liz with daughters, Robyn (left) and Jacqueline, on the occasion of her Ph.D. graduation, 1990.



Fig. 6. Liz with her beloved Lake Gairdner within the Gawler Ranges.

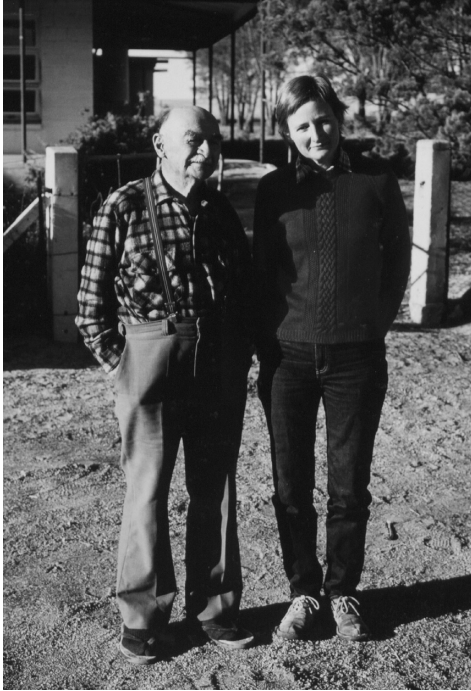


Fig. 4. Liz with John Kwaterski, pioneer farmer of Pildappa, northwestern Eyre Peninsula, in the late 'eighties.

Sciences, Twidale transferred to Geology and Geophysics in 1988. Despite her being urged to remain in Geography, Liz followed, and elected to study the evolution of the Gawler Ranges landscape as her thesis topic; this despite discouraging comments on the part of some colleagues who thought it unpromising and unsuitable for a doctoral dissertation. In the event it proved to be a winner. Liz loved the Ranges, its varied and, as it proved, ancient scenery, and also and in particular Lake Gairdner.

The thesis was written, submitted, and was approved with enthusiasm by the external examiners in 1990. It was to form the basis for several published research papers.

During the period 1991-2001 she con-

tinued her work as lecturer, tutor and demonstrator variously at North Terrace, Roseworthy and (1998-2001), visiting at Flinders University. She also continued to publish. She hoped for an established position in Geology and Geophysics, but also applied for an advertised Lectureship in Geography, and for academic and research positions elsewhere and overseas, but without success. Her many fine qualities became obvious not in a spectacular contrived display but in the vicissitudes of routine in the long haul: she was a quiet achiever and a fine colleague. However, unemployed, Liz joined a firm of accountants as administrator and also trainee consultant. She took elementary exams and qualified, but then in 2002 Dr Yvonne Bone of the Department of Geology and Geophysics had a grant-supported opening for a research assistant studying *Bryozoa*. Liz knew little or nothing about the subject but such was her reputation for application and hard work that she was appointed, and to everyone's benefit. Liz took to the subject and greatly assisted Yvonne, travelled to Britain to discuss Antarctic bryozoans with colleagues at the Natural Science Museum in London, and to South America for a conference in Santiago, Chile. In Peru she was joined by daughter Jacqueline for a wonderful holiday together, amongst other things visiting the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu. So what was to be her last overseas excursion ended on a particularly happy note.

By 2005 the bryozoan project was drawing to a close and Liz decided to retire. She looked forward to playing golf again, to seeing more of her family and especially her grandsons Ben and Will (courtesy Robyn and Rob). She wanted to resume her study of Lake Gairdner and to this end was appointed Visiting Research Fellow in the School

of Earth and Environmental Sciences in the discipline of Geology and Geophysics, based in the Mawson Laboratories where she had launched her student career. Unfortunately, serious health problems intervened. She was diagnosed with cancer in May 2007. Despite surgery and follow-up treatment, the disease spread and she died on 4 April 2008, just five days short of her 68<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Research and Publications

Liz was a considerable scholar. She possessed an impressive personal library (some of it inherited from her father) suggesting special interests in history and the Earth, but with poetry and women's achievements also well represented.

Having recognised a possible research problem, her first step always was to ascertain the state of play by identifying and gathering any publications germane to the particular topic. Her interest in landforms was captured by a Third Year field camp in the southern Flinders Ranges in the winter of 1961. As a result she specialised in Geomorphology in her Honours year. For her dissertation she studied the morphology and origin of gnammas or rock basins developed on some of the granite inselbergs around Minnipa, on northwestern Eyre Peninsula. She organised some of her colleagues at St Ann's and a fellow Honours student, Graham Walker, to assist with mapping as well as for company. They camped at Pildappa Rock, where the local farmer was John Kwaterski, Senior (figure 4). His was an inspiring story and his wife also was a remarkable person. A cultivated lady and former teacher from Cologne, Germany, she had settled easily into farm and rural life. She took Liz's group in hand and most late afternoons saw

some or all of the group enjoying afternoon tea with Mrs K. and also taking advantage of her bathroom facilities. Liz produced some fine maps and report. It was the beginning not only of an enduring and active interest in granitic landscapes and indeed in landscapes in general, but also of a long friendship with the Kwaterski family.

When she was appointed Tutor in the Department of Geography she enrolled for an M.A., a research degree which in the Humanities at that time was regarded as the stepping-stone to higher things, including the doctorate. Liz directed her attention to lunettes, the immobile dunes located on the lee shores of lakes, lagoons, playas, pans and river channels in many parts of arid and semiarid southern Australia. Hills' (1940) account of the forms had been challenged (Stephens and Crocker 1946) but there were still anomalies between the field evidence and received wisdom. Also, Liz's family home in the South East district stood on a lunette, and there were many examples on which to work in her home area. Her father, Owen Corbin, took a keen interest in the investigation and helped Liz with some of the field work. Liz investigated lunettes not only in the South East but also in the Mid North of South Australia. Both in the field and in the library she displayed the tenacity and determination that came to be her trademark. She presented a new and more satisfactory explanation for the forms by comparing the mechanism responsible for lunettes with that which produces coastal foredunes. The value of her achievement was not diminished by two coincidences not uncommon in scientific investigations. First, she later found that Jim Bowler (ANU), who became doyen of lunette studies in Australia, independently, though for

different reasons, had reached conclusions similar to hers. And second, she discovered that she had been anticipated. Evidence of the drift of detritus by wind-driven waves in the ephemeral lakes of the South East district of South Australia, a mechanism central to her interpretation of lunettes, had been noted a century earlier in 1862 by 'the Hillside Priest', J.E. Tenison Woods.

When in the 'eighties she was appointed to work with Twidale she was able to resume her interest in granite forms and also become familiar with palaeosurfaces, a topic that came to the fore when in the late 'eighties she embarked on her study of the Gawler Ranges. Liz studied the morphology of the massif, which is developed on Mesoproterozoic silicic volcanic rocks and granite. It

consists of ordered rows of bornhardts or domical hills. Liz was able to demonstrate that they had developed by fracture-controlled subsurface weathering beneath a planation surface of Early Mesozoic age; that they had been exposed as landforms in the Early Cretaceous some 120-130 million years ago; and, contrary to the conventional geomorphological thinking, that the landscape had changed very little in the intervening eons.

Her Gawler Ranges study involved field work in fairly remote country. She loved camping but also stayed with Joan Andrews at Mt Ive. Robyn and Jacqueline helped as field assistants and companions, as did her sister Anne (Stott), Jennie Bourne, Twidale and the late Lance Beck. Doug Elefsen, an old friend from the Minnipa Hotel-Motel,



Fig. 5. Liz determined to find the evidence, Talia Beach, mid 'nineties.

gave her a grand tour over the Ranges in his Cessna. She more than repaid this assistance and concern with a fine thesis. She never lost interest in 'her' Ranges. In particular, during her doctoral field work she became entranced by Lake Gairdner (figure 5), particularly its origin and the effects of salt weathering on the tough volcanic rocks exposed in its shoreline. She resumed her investigation of this large and unusual salina in retirement but like so much else, this was to be tragically cut short.

### Liz and Words

Liz loved and respected words and was an inveterate and eclectic reader. She believed that good writing begins with good reading. She was rigorous in her own use of language and the presentation of ideas, and was equally critical of the English used by others. In a sense she missed her vocation, for she was a formidable editor with an eagle-eye for incorrect spellings or grammatical transgressions. In addition she brought to bear a critical intelligence that allowed her to identify gaps in logic and inadequate explanations. A single glance would catch any typo, transposition or surplus spacing. Clear concise English was not enough: it had also to be grammatically, linguistically and technically correct. Tomes like the *OED*, Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, Roget's *Thesaurus*, *The (Commonwealth) Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, and *Standard Geological Symbols*, the *AGI Glossary of Geology* were her bibles; though like some of her close colleagues she disagreed with many of the *Glossary* entries.

She became Assistant Editor of the Royal Society of South Australia, responsible for Earth Science papers, and also edited a

special volume for the Geological Society of Australia. Her abilities were in great demand informally and her expert assistance proved invaluable for many colleagues and postgraduate students, several of whom benefited from her meticulous correction of their theses at draft stage. In this, as in other matters, she was a lady of principle, resigning from the associate editorship of the Royal Society when her decision on a submitted manuscript was overruled for unsatisfactory (i.e. unstated) reasons.

### Final thoughts

Liz was utterly reliable, learned, tenacious, and meticulous, qualities that shone through in her research and teaching. It was especially obvious in the field, where she frequently worked in difficult conditions, but also in her formal and informal editing. She was conscientious in all she did. She was a compassionate but rigorous tutor and teacher, with high expectations. Her administrative abilities were of a high order, whether concerning a field excursion or a practical course. Many student groups and visiting overseas colleagues will remember, and be grateful for, her thorough planning and organisation. She enjoyed her times in the field and though in her mid 'thirties she contracted mature-age diabetes (which was never really under control, and was troublesome throughout the rest of her life) Liz did not let it interfere unduly with her activities. As is partly indicated by the provenance of the authors who have contributed to this volume (but only partly, for some who would have liked to contribute, for various reasons found they were unable to do so), she enjoyed the respect and friendship of many of the overseas colleagues she met in the course

of various conferences and field excursions. Liz touched many lives.

News of her illness and passing was greeted with dismay and disappointment. She was a lady of integrity who was not afraid to put possibly unpopular views directly. She was a loyal friend, but duty always took priority. Her last year was dif-

ficult, but the loving care of her daughters was a solace not only to Liz but also to her many friends, and with their support and that of her extended family, she bore her ordeal with courage and dignity. Those who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing Liz would have expected no less, but all were nevertheless both impressed and moved.

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