

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AT THE ALBANY MUSEUM

Albany Museum is proud to honour the dedication and commitment of two women curators who managed the museum for fifteen years, as South Africa celebrates fifteen years of Women's Day, and fifteen years of democracy. Miss B Glanville was a curator for six years, from 1882 to 1888, and Dr Lita Webley followed years after in 1999 to 2008. These were the only two women directors who worked with vigour in the museum's 154 years history.



from researchers (especially those interested in shells) in the United States, England, France and Africa. Her neat handwriting to a donor of shells from Algeria (a letter in 1888 months before her death)

*With kind regards
I am
Yours truly
Mary Glanville
Curator*

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARY GLANVILLE

(First Woman to become A Museum Director At Albany Museum)

THE GLANVILLE FAMILY

Two brothers, Burt James and Thomas Pugh, emigrated from England to the Cape in 1856, becoming a Museum Curator/Town Clerk and newspaper editor, respectively. Thomas died in 1878 leaving his brother to mourn his loss. Burt James by this time, was married to Elizabeth and had four children, one daughter and three sons (one son died young). But it was his daughter, Elizabeth, who carried on his museum work. She had become an expert on agricultural pests but her ill health prevented her from delivering the last of her talks. Her tireless preparations for the Queen's Jubilee Exhibition from December 1887 to January 1888 took her toll on her. Her brother, Godfrey, made one case in Room 2 of the museum. Even the reduced hours did not help and she fell ill. She died at the Albany General Hospital on 4 April 1888, just four months after the Exhibition that brought 25 000 visitors to the City Hall and the Museum Galleries. Her grave inscription is just a footnote on the tombstone of her father and brothers. Glanville Street, off Beaufort Street, is named after Burt James Glanville.

THE ALBANY MUSEUM AT THAT TIME

The Museum started by the Literary, Scientific, Medico-Chirurgical Society was housed on the first floor of the City Hall. There were four galleries; Room 1 housing fossils, stone implements, birds of prey, porcupines and eagles; Room 2 displaying rocks, minerals, buck, hornbills, skulls of elephant, hippo and buffalo; Room 3 displaying colonial woods, quails, cranes, sea birds and finally, Room 4 displaying mollusc, geese, eggs, tortoises and foreign birds.

A Catalogue of exhibits accompanied the exhibition. The catalogue cost the museum £20 which it could hardly afford, not even having the services of a taxidermist. At the end of the museum section in the Catalogue, there is an appeal: "It is hoped that what has already been accomplished in the Museum towards the development and illustration of the Natural History of South Africa, will stimulate further research and increased public support and interest in so important an Educational Institution." (p 109) The Albany Museum was an international institution. Miss Glanville received letters and request for exchanges

It was a Town Clerk, B.J. Glanville who in 1972 became the first Honorary Curator of the Museum. He was to serve it for 23 years, ably assisted by his daughter. Miss Mary Glanville took a special interest in agricultural pests. She became the first paid curator at the rate of 50 pounds per annum, serving from 1882-1888, by which time her salary had risen to 100 pounds.

The Late Miss Glanville

("She was a woman in a thousand")

The few brief moments at our disposal on Wednesday last precluded all possibility of any extended reference to the sad event that has cast so deep a gloom over the city –aye, and for miles around the countryside. Seldom –if ever have we heard the death of a citizen evokes such expression of regrets as are repeatedly made on every hand. "Poor Miss Glanville!" is the sympathetic expression of every one you meet, and her excellent qualities are discussed with a kind of melancholy interest. Good, amiable, obliging, self sacrificing she was and we were prepared to hear, from the lips of a gentleman of her acquaintance, this beautiful penegyric (sic) on the deceased lady: - "I have known her from the cradle to the grave. She was a woman in a thousand." This is a brief but forcible and deserved tribute to the memory of a worthy lady. In the death of Miss Glanville, a public loss has been sustained which those who are familiar with the routine of a museum work, and know how efficiently and laboriously –how heroically she toiled to the last – can fully realise. Her devotion to duty was remarkable, and it was often to us a marvel how that fragile frame bore the strain so long. She bravely fought against the approach of the disease that has proved fatal to her, and when advised by the writer of this imperfect notice to desist from her labour and seek the rest she needed, the noble girl replied, quietly, "But my absence would necessitate the closing of the Museum, and cause disappointment to visitors". The same thoughtfulness for others, we are told, marked her private life, and shortly before her own fatal illness, she sat up night after night and nursed back to life, and health the child of a friend. She never wearied of doing good.

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DR LITA WEBLEY (1999 - 2008)

Dr Lita Webley started as an Acting Director of the Albany Museum in 1999, succeeding Mr Wouter Holleman who took retirement. She saw the museum through difficult times, especially the financial crisis that nearly saw the museum shutting down. On the other hand, there were exciting moments, including the construction of an exhibition to celebrate Rhodes University's centenary (1904 - 2004), and the 150th birthday of the Museum (1855 - 2005).

During her reign, the Museum saw an increase in the staff complement, from fifteen (15) in 1998 to 68 in 2007, including critical posts such as that of State Accountant.

As the Director, she had to represent the Museum in the provincial structure of the Heads of the Museums. Of most interest emanating from these meetings was the discussion of the Museum becoming a

Public Entity (with other 15 provincially-aided museums). Act No.7 of 2004 replaced the Museum Ordinance of NO. 8 of 1975.

Dr Lita Webley has a particular interest in the archaeology of pastoralist peoples (Khoikhoi) in Namaqualand (Western Cape Region) and is also involved in historical archaeology and educational programmes. She and Dr Johan Binnemann, Archaeology Department Curator, visited and recorded rock art sites in the region when time permitted. An increasing amount of time was spent on contract archaeological work. She served on a number of committees in Grahamstown, including Rhodes University Senate, Makana Tourism Management, and the Scifest Africa.

Dr Lita Webley resigned in 2008 to return to her professional practice, working as an archaeologist consultant for the University of Cape Town.