

# Joan Marjorie Dingley (1916 – 2008)

Joan Dingley was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on 14 May 1916. Her parents were from Presteigne in Radnorshire, Wales, where her mother's family, country people, were all keen gardeners. As a child Joan received pocket money for helping tend the vegetable garden, and also had her own garden. She was taken on family tramping trips in the Auckland bush, and through her father's stevedoring business became familiar with a range of exotic fruits from island traders. He died when she was nine. Joan was educated at the Ladies' College, Remuera, where she had early lessons in botany, and at the Diocesan School for Girls in Auckland, where she favoured music. However, she studied science at Auckland University College and graduated MSc (1942) in botany, with a thesis on the tree fern *Dicksonia squarrosa* (whēkī).

She began her 35-year career with the Plant Diseases Division of DSIR (now Landcare Research) at Mt Albert in 1941, one of the few women appointed to scientific positions when young men were required for military service. Her first task, to find means of rot-proofing canvas for wartime use in the Pacific Islands, set her on the path of mycology and plant pathology in which she was to excel. As mycology was not taught during her graduate training, and she was denied the opportunity offered to returning servicemen to study for a doctorate, she had to learn her skills on the job. In 1952 she took a year's leave without pay to study at the Commonwealth Mycological Institute at Kew and in 1958 was granted ten months paid leave to visit herbaria in Europe. She became a world authority on the *Hypocreales*, and was later invited to present the findings of her research at

international conferences. Other work included identifying the cause of facial eczema in sheep (1959) and consolidating a record of plant diseases in New Zealand (1969). She collected extensively in remote forests, and saw the number of specimens in the New Zealand fungal herbarium "mushroom" from 4000 to 35,000 before she retired in 1976.

As well as being an authority on fungi, Joan was knowledgeable about New Zealand native and introduced plants. She had a life-long interest in horticulture, and the garden of the family home in Remuera where she lived was filled with treasures. She was an active and enthusiastic member of the Auckland Botanical Society, Auckland Tramping Club, the Alpine Sports Club and Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, and a prime mover in the establishment of the Auckland Botanic Gardens. Internationally recognised by James M Trappe who named the genus *Dingleya* after her, she is also honoured in the names of 26 New Zealand fungi species, including *Gloecantharellus dingleyae*, recorded on just two occasions in the Waitakere Range, Auckland, and described as *Gomphus dingleyae* by Barbara Segeedin in 1985. Other honours include an honorary DSc from Massey University (1994), an OBE in 1995 and the naming of Landcare Research's J M Dingley Microbiology Laboratory in 2004.

Joan Dingley died in her 92nd year on 1 January 2008. A significant bequest to Massey University was used to establish the Joan Dingley Scholarship to support high achieving Masters Students in the field of mycology.

## *Gloecantharellus dingleyae*

*Gloecantharellus* (Greek *gloi* 'jelly or gum', referring to the gelatinous hyphae; *kantheros* 'wide drinking flask'; Latin *ella* 'small') is a genus of mostly sturdy, fleshy and funnel-shaped fungi with smooth to wrinkled outer surfaces, somewhat similar to chanterelles, but without gills. Two of the eleven species are endemic to New Zealand. The fruiting body of *Gloecantharellus dingleyae* is pink or brownish yellow, 70 mm in height and about 70 mm wide, tapering to 6–15 mm. More robust than *G. novae-zelandiae*, it has broad lamella folds, solid stipe and margin becoming lacerate with age. Both species occur together in litter in mixed podocarp-broadleaf forest, but have so far been recorded only in the Auckland area.

PHOTO: Landcare Research

