

**THE EAST AFRICAN FLORA, AND THOSE WHO STUDY IT, HAVE
LOST A GREAT FRIEND,
KEW BOTANIST SALLY BIDGOOD**

13 April 1948–18 March 2018

Sally Bidgood loved fieldwork in Africa and could have gone on with that forever, but suffered failing health during the last years of her life. She died of inoperable bone cancer on 18 March 2018 at the Charing Cross Hospital, London.



Sally Bidgood. Studio portrait from around 1990. Photographer unknown.

Sally, first known as Gillian Sally Lee, was born on 13 April 1948 in Corbridge on the River Tyne, about 30 km west of Newcastle, Northumberland, where her mother and three brothers survive her. Her father was a mining engineer, who worked in Great Britain and on the continent. From 1959 to 1965, Sally attended secondary school at Ackworth near Pontefract in West Yorkshire, one of the eight Quaker Schools in England. The school emphasises both the development of the abilities of individuals and the friendly and responsible relations between the scholars, and these ideas impressed Sally for the rest of her life. To her, good, meticulous work, loyalty, kindness to others and inner integrity mattered more than outer show. She continued her education at the Haydon Bridge Technical School and the Froebel College at Roehampton, now part of the University of Roehampton. Her first

bread-and-butter job was with the Royal Mail and the Yellow Pages; she also volunteered at the Water and Steam Museum between Brentford and Kew.

In 1973, she came to the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as a member of the African team. She never suffered fools gladly, usually expressing herself clearly and directly, and yet without causing unnecessary offence. During one of her first years at Kew, before I met her in person, I saw a large note on a table in the herbarium, illustrated with drawings of skulls, guns and gallows and expressing in abundantly clear, but humorous terms that nothing should be touched or moved. Asking whom the author was, I was told by Dr. R.K. Brummitt, senior African team-member and later a co-author: "Oh, that is Sally. You will meet her."

Sally loved fun and helped to organise social events at Kew, and became an active member of the Kew Club. She was loyal and supportive to the younger members of the African team, but could have disillusioned views on some senior staff. Soon, Sally became an active member of the Trade Union for Professional Civil Servants (IPCS, now PROSPECT), took the full-scale courses for residential representatives and became Branch Secretary and later Branch Chair at Kew. She was instrumental in getting the British Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF, now DEFRA), and hence Kew to secure insurance cover for staff on fieldwork. In cases of conflicts, she carefully looked at all the evidence and was not afraid of heterodox conclusions.

In the herbarium, Sally was keenly helping visitors, particularly all visiting African botanists. She was also strict with careless treatment of specimens; to her they were almost family, and she emphasized the amount of work, dedication and knowledge that had gone into their collections and creation. If specimens were badly treated, she would react.

After some years at the herbarium, Sally came into her own with field exploration of the African flora. It was evident that she had a real talent for organising and carrying out botanical field work, including all the paper work, getting equipment and provisions organised, and sometimes doing the detailed planning required for camping trips in the old-fashioned way with porters to areas without roads, where very little would be available. With this work, she was both relaxed and supportive, which helped to ease trying conditions on long field trips to remote areas. She was always prepared to have a chat, a beer and a cigarette with members of the field trip or with the local officials and helpers. Together with her strikingly long, curly hair, her fondness for always wearing flipflops and her easily triggered and distinctive laugh, these features made her a well-known and well-liked person wherever we came. If she had been to a place before, somebody would always recognise her and greet her warmly, and when I came back without her to remote places in Ethiopia, people very often asked, "Where is Sally?"

Sally's field trips in Tanzania (floristic regions according to the Flora of Tropical East Africa):

- 1986, with Jon Lovett to areas in T7 (Iringa and Mbeya Districts) and T6 (Morogoro District).
- 1988, with Leonard Mwasumbi and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T6 (Morogoro and Kilosa Districts), T7 (Iringa and Mbeya Districts) and T5 (Mpwapa and Dodoma Districts).
- 1991, with Raphael Abdallah and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T8 (Lindi, Mtwara, Masasi and Tunduru Districts).
- 1994, with Frank Mbago and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T7 (Chunya and Mbeya Districts) and T4 (Sumbawanga, Nkansi, Mpanda, Kigoma and Kibondo Districts).

- 1997, with Daniel Sitoni, Chris Whitehouse and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T4 (Sumbawanga, Nkansi, Mpanda and Kigoma Districts).
- 2000, with Godson Leliyo and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T4 (Mpanda District) and T1 (Bukoba District).
- 2006, with Iain Darbyshire, Kim Hoenselaar, Godson Leliyo, Gabriel Sanchez-Ken and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T7 (Iringa, Mbeya and Tunduma Districts) and T4 (Sumbawanga and Mpanda Districts) and with Kim Hoenselaar, Godson Leliyo and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T4 (Sumbawanga, Mpanda and Tabora Districts) and T5 (Manyoni, Dodoma and Kondoa Districts).
- 2008, with Godson Leliyo and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T4 (Sumbawanga, Mpanda, Sikonge, Tabora and Nzega Districts).
- 2009, with Godson Leliyo and Kaj Vollesen to areas in T4 (Tabora, Sikonge and Mpanda Districts).

During Sally's trips in Tanzania a total of 8194 collections were made. They have gone to the two large herbaria in Tanzania, at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (DSM) and the National Herbarium of Tanzania, Arusha (NHT), and to the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (K), with duplicates to the East African Herbarium of the National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi (EA).



Sally Bidgood with Gumuz market women at the lowland bamboo thicket Anbessa Chaka ("Lion Forest") near the Sudan border at Assosa, Ethiopia, in 2007. Sally easily got in contact with local women. Photograph by Ib Friis.

Sally's field trips in Ethiopia (floristic regions according to the Flora of Ethiopia and Eritrea, which have no well-known subunits; nearest towns, borders or national parks are mentioned):

- 1995, with Malaku Wondafrash, Peter Høst, Shigulte Kebede and Ib Friis to TU (Mekele, Adua and Axum, Eritrean border), GD and GJ (Sudan border) and KF (Waka), IL (Gambela to Sudan border).
- 1996, with Fantahun Semon, Michael Jensen, Menassie Gashaw, Lemessa Keneei and Ib Friis to GJ (western lowlands), WG (Assosa), IL (Gambela to Sudan border) and KF (Waka).
- 1997, with Melaku Wondafrash, Gashaw Gebre-Hiwot and Ib Friis to SD (Yavello, Mega and Moyale, Mount Furoli, El Gof), and GG (Mago National Park, lower Omo Valley).
- 1998, with Melaku Wondafrash, Amsalu Ayana, Fantahun Simon, Lemessa Keneei, Getu Teferra and Ib Friis to WG (Sudan border at Kurmuk and Gizen, Didessa Valley), SD (Arero, Sagan River, upper Omo River at Soddu), GG (Lake Chamo, Nechisar National Park).
- 2000, with Melaku Wondafrash, Ermias Getachew and Ib Friis to KF (Mezan Tefari, Bebeke State Coffee Plantation), IL (Tepi State Coffee Plantation), SD (Negelle, Filtu, Dolo Odo and Mandera) and border between SD and SU (Gurage Mts.).
- 2001, with Melaku Wondafrash, Ermias Getachew and Ib Friis to AF (Gewane, Asaita, Dichio and Serdo in the south; Berhale in the north), TU (Mekele, Adigrat, Atzbi and Abergele), WU (Woldia, Debre Tabor and Lalibela).
- 2002, with Assefa Hailu, Ermias Getachew and Ib Friis to SD (Negele, Genale River, Arero, El Leh to Chelago, Amaro Mts., Buji), BA (Dolo Mena), GG (Sawla), KF (Waka).
- 2003, with Fikre Dessalegn, Malaku Legesse and Kaj Vollesen in SD (around Yavelo, Arero, Wachile, Melka Guba and Filtu).
- 2004, with Assefa Hailu, Berhanu Yitbarek and Ib Friis to GJ (Choke Mountains., Debre Tabor, Zegie Peninsula at Lake Tana), GD (Metemma, Sudan border) and with Ib Friis, Assefa Hailu and Ermias Getachew to GD and GJ (western lowlands, Sudan border).
- 2005, with Wege Abebe, Ermias Getachew and Ib Friis to TU (between Mekele, Afar and the Eritrean border), GD (Adi Arkay), GG (Rift Valley Lakes). Fieldwork interrupted by general public rebellion that followed the May 2005 elections in Ethiopia.
- 2007, with Assefa Hailu, Ermias Getachew, Ahmet Abdela and Ib Friis to AF (southern part near Djibouti), and with Ib Friis, Wege Abebe and Ermias Getachew to GJ (lower Blue Nile Valley; Sudan border) and WG (Assosa).

During Sally's field trips in Ethiopia a total of 5626 collections were made. These collections are at the Ethiopian National Herbarium, Addis Ababa (ETH), the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (K), and the Herbarium of the National History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (C).

If added up, the time Sally spent in Africa on field trips will come to about five years. During this time, she took part in the collection of 13 820 numbers; to date nearly 110 new species have been described from these collections, of which the largest part, 102 new species, are from Tanzania, while many of the Ethiopian collections were new for the country or represented significant extension of the known range.

Sally retired from Kew in 2008 and after that, in spite of trips to Tanzania during the years 2013-2015 and to Zambia in 2015-2017, all with Kaj Vollesen, she withdrew from active life at Kew. She continued also to love her home area in the Northumbrian countryside. Sharing with members of her family, she had a cottage near Hexham, near her birthplace, Corbridge. Even with her characteristic personality now gone, the many plants she collected in tropical Africa will always remind researchers that there has been a Sally Bidgood, who loved the African flora. She will be sadly missed by her many friends at Kew, in England and Denmark and elsewhere in Europe, in Ethiopia and in East Africa.

Plant taxa named by Sally Bidgood

- Acanthostelma* Bidgood & Brummitt (1985) (Acanthaceae)
Acanthostelma thymifolium (Chiov.) Bidgood & Brummitt (1985) (Acanthaceae)
Diplophium boranense Bidgood & Vollesen (2006) (Apiaceae)
Dombeya kefaensis Friis & Bidgood (1998) (Sterculiaceae)
Fernandoa abbreviata Bidgood (1994) (Bignoniaceae)
Fernandoa lutea (Verdc.) Bidgood (1994) (Bignoniaceae)
Kigelia africana (Lam.) Benth. subsp. *moosa* (Sprague) Bidgood & Verdc. (2006) (Bignoniaceae)
Neuracanthus africanus T.Anderson ex S.Moore var. *limpopoensis* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus africanus T.Anderson ex S.Moore var. *masaicus* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus africanus T.Anderson ex S.Moore var. *ruahae* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus decorus S.Moore subsp. *strobilinus* (C.B.Clarke) Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus mahajangensis Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus matsabadianus Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus migiurtinus Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus ovalifolius (Fiori) Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus pedalis Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus robecchii C.B.Clarke subsp. *atratus* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus sect. *Didymosperma* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus tephrophyllus Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus tephrophyllus Bidgood & Brummitt subsp. *conifer* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus tephrophyllus Bidgood & Brummitt subsp. *tsavoensis* Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus tetragonostachyus Nees subsp. *trinervius* (Wight) Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Neuracanthus umbraticus Bidgood & Brummitt (1998) (Acanthaceae)
Sesbania melanocaulis Bidgood & Friis (1998) (Leguminosae)
Spathodea campanulata P.Beauv. subsp. *congolana* Bidgood (1994) (Bignoniaceae)
Spathodea campanulata P.Beauv. subsp. *nilotica* (Seem.) Bidgood (1994) (Bignoniaceae)

Eponyms

- Cyphostemma bidgoodiae* Verdc.(1993), as 'bidgoodae'. (Vitaceae)
Dyschoriste sallyae Vollesen (2008) (Acanthaceae)
Erythrocephalum sallyae Beentje (2000) (Asteraceae)

Fuirena bidgoodiae Hoenselaar & Muasya (2010) (Cyperaceae)

Pavetta bidgoodiae Bridson (2001) (Rubiaceae)

Plectranthus sallyae A.J.Paton (2009) (Lamiaceae)

Publications by Sally Bidgood

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Bidgood, S. (1992). The identity of *Strigina* Engl. (Scrophulariaceae). *Kew Bulletin* **47**: 775-776.

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Bidgood, S. (1994). Intraspecific variation in *Spathodea campanulata* (Bignoniaceae). In J.H. Seyani & A.C. Chikuni (eds), *Proceedings of the 13th Plenary Meeting of AETFAT, Zomba, Malawi, 2-11 April, 1991: volume 1. Plants for People*. Zomba: National Herbarium and Botanic Gardens of Malawi. Pp.327-331.

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Friis, I. & S. Bidgood (1998) *Dombeya kefaensis*, sp. nov. (Sterculiaceae) from S.W. Ethiopia. *Nordic Journal of Botany* **18**: 215-220.

Bidgood, S. & P. Cribb (1999). *Vanilla roscheri* (Orchidaceae) newly reported from Ethiopia. *Kew Bulletin* **54**: 378.

Bidgood, S. (2001). Ethiopian artefacts made with plant materials: vanishing wonders. In I. Friis & O. Ryding (eds.), *Biodiversity Research in the Horn of Africa Region. Biologiske Skrifter* **54**. Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. Pp. 311-318.

Friis, I. & S. Bidgood (2001). Additional observations on *Dombeya kefaensis* (Sterculiaceae) and the diversity of *Dombeya* in SW. Ethiopia. *Nordic Journal of Botany* **21**: 337-340.

Bidgood, S., B. Verdcourt & K. Vollesen (2006). *Flora of Tropical East Africa. Bignoniaceae & Cobaeaceae*. Kew: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. 53 pp.

Bidgood, S. & K. Vollesen (2006). A new species of *Diplolophium* (Apiaceae) from Ethiopia. *Kew Bulletin* **61**: 239-242.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the writing of this obituary, IF gratefully acknowledges information from Kaj Vollesen who was Sally's partner for more than thirty years and who has been IF's friend since their time at the University of Copenhagen and their joint field trips in Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s.

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