

OBITUARY

MOLONY — On 22nd August 1952 the death occurred of the Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Molony who, as Miss Napier, was the first Botanist employed by the Coryndon Museum, where she worked from 1930 to 1934.

Miss Napier had always been interested in botany, and after her arrival in Kenya in 1922 she used to draw and paint wild flowers for her own amusement. In 1929 Mr. Ernest Carr, a keen supporter of the Coryndon Museum, saw the flower paintings and felt that they deserved a wider public; he gave a grant to the Museum for the purpose of paying a salary to Miss Napier as Botanist for the period of four years. Having had no previous training in botany, Miss Napier accepted the appointment with some hesitation. She went home, and after some months in Kew, where she received a botanical grounding, she returned to start her post at the Museum in 1931.

Although Miss Napier was always very modest about her accomplishments, one cannot but feel the greatest admiration for the magnificent work she did in four short years. Not only did she build up a very useful Herbarium of East African plants, numbering over four thousand mounted sheets, but she also published a series of papers, illustrated with her own line-drawings, on the East African Flora for the Journal of the "East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society". She adorned the Botanical Exhibit Room at the Museum with a great many of her excellent water-colour drawings of indigenous plants, and made four of the six beautiful colour plates for the first edition of "Gardening in East Africa", 1934.



The Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Molony.

Miss Napier's name appears as one of the collaborators in White and Sloane's standard work on the Stapeliads published in 1937, for which she supplied all the local information available on the subject, as well as a number of illustrations. The authors named *Stapelia molonyae* after her.

At the Kew Herbarium, with which she continued to collaborate and where she sent her collections to be studied and named, Miss Napier's work was much appreciated; her plant material was always well preserved, fully annotated and often amplified with sectional drawings.

Miss Napier went to England on leave at the end of her contract with the Museum. She returned to Kenya in 1935 to marry Mr. D. W. Molony, who was farming there, and whom she had known since 1926.

Marriage, with children to bring up and life on a farm, left little leisure for botanical studies; but Mrs. Molony continued to show great interest in the Museum, and when ever she found an opportunity she brought plants for the Herbarium.

When, four years after she had left the Museum, the writer took over the duties of Botanist, Mrs. Molony was most helpful with her advice, and greatly facilitated his task. She kept in close touch with the Herbarium until the outbreak of the war, when her husband joined the Army and the heavy burden of running the farm and educating her children fell upon her. Indeed, in addition to her own, Mrs. Molony supervised the work on other farms whose owners had joined up; and it was only natural that her visits and contributions to the Herbarium ceased altogether.

However, her interest in the Museum remained to the last. As Miss Evelyn Napier her name will always be remembered in connection with its early development, not only for her work, but also her loyal and charming personality.

P.R.O. Bally.

Sept. 1952.