Margery (Mobbs) Moberly (1938–2008)

Margery (Mobbs) Moberly (70) well-known in Pietermaritzburg from her long association with the University of Natal Press, died in Durban in June after a brief illness, the victim of a particularly aggressive cancer of the lungs.

Born in Kokstad, Moberly grew up in Kloof, starting her schooling at St Mary's and, after her parents had moved to Eshowe, completing it at Durban Girls' College of which she was Dux in 1954. She then did an arts degree and teaching diploma on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal, taking a very active part in student life. It was on that campus that much of her later working life was to be spent.

On graduating she taught briefly in government schools in Natal, then for a few years in Kenya at Limaru Girls' School, followed by a further spell in London before returning to South Africa in the mid-sixties to a post at Epworth.

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The acquisition of a library science diploma brought her back to the university, first in the library, then to the university archives and finally to the university press. Initially termed the manager of the University of Natal Press, she was eventually awarded the rather grand title of Publisher to the University and built up the press from a shaky start as a somewhat amateur and part-time operation to a highly professional institution, internationally respected for the quality of its scholarly publications.

In her years at the Press Moberly notched up an impressive list of publications. Among them were four volumes of the *James Stuart Archive* (edited by Colin de B Webb and John Wright), *A Zulu King Speaks* (with the same two editors), six volumes of *British Settlers in Natal* (by Shelagh O'Byrne Spencer), *The Colin Webb Natal and Zululand Series*, *The Anglo-Zulu War* (edited by Andrew Duminy and Charles Ballard), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910* (edited by Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Society* (edited by Bill Guest and John Sellers), *Receded Tides of Empire* (with the same two editors), *Kingdom and Colony at War* (edited by John Laband and Paul Thompson), *Betrayed Trust* (by John Lambert), *The Hunting Journal of Robert Briggs Struthers* (edited by Patricia Merrett and Ronald Butcher), *The Praises of Dingana* (edited by David Rycroft and Bhekabantu Ngcobo) and the two volumes of *Travels in Southern Africa* by the Frenchman Adulphe Delegorgue (both translated from the French by Fleur Webb and introduced by Stephanie Alexander and Colin Webb in the case of the Volume 1 and Stephanie Alexander and Bill Guest for Volume 2).

Perhaps Moberly's greatest triumph as a publisher was the production of *Pietermaritzburg 1838–1988, A new portrait of an African City* (a work now out of print) to mark the capital's sesquicentennial. It was a project which she both conceptualised and drove with relentless energy and enthusiasm. Edited by John Laband and the present Msunduzi Municipal Manager Rob Haswell (then on the staff of the university), the book embodied contributions by an astonishing 73 authors from a wide range of academic disciplines. It covered virtually every possible aspect of the city's history from two million years before the present to what were at that time contemporary developments.

Moberly's death coincided with the Cape Town Book Fair and, appropriately, the University Press flew the flag on its stand at half-mast for the duration of the fair.

Val Ward, formerly of the Natal Museum and a long-standing acquaintance said of her: 'Mobbs Moberly was a generous, witty and caring friend with whom I shared many meals, laughter and tears as well as the occasional argument. We enjoyed working together on *The Witness* series 'The way we were' in 1999. She was dynamic and a perfectionist who leaves a gap in the lives of her large circle of friends.'

Moberly never married. She leaves two older sisters and their respective families as well many friends. A well-attended memorial function was held in the Dargle.

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