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## Obituary

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### Sheila Willmott (1921–1998)

CAB International and the Editor, Assistant Editor and Editorial Board of the *Journal of Helminthology* wish to express their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Sheila Willmott who died on 8 May 1998 after a very short illness. Sheila served as Editor of the *Journal of Helminthology* from 1980 to 1986.

Dr Lotfi Khalil, formerly Deputy Director of the International Institute of Parasitology at St Albans, worked closely with Sheila and has written the following tribute.

John W. Lewis  
Editor

Sheila Willmott was a leading contributor to the dissemination of parasitic information before the development of computerization and information technology. She was born on 8 June, 1921, in London, and was educated at Tollington High School for Girls, Chelsea Polytechnic and University College, London. She did her PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine under the supervision of Professor John Buckley, the subject of her thesis being the study of amphistome digeneans. Her studies were interrupted as a result of the Second World War when she was 'drafted' as a Rodent Instructor at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. After completing her PhD, she was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Zoology at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff. In 1951, Professor R. T. Leiper, the Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Parasitology (Helminthology) recruited her as a Scientific Information Officer. She was appointed Assistant Director of the Bureau in 1954, and Director in 1961, where she stayed until her retirement in 1980.

During her period as Director of the Bureau, which was sited in the White House in the centre of St Albans, she maintained and improved the high quality of *Helminthological Abstracts* and, in 1976, accepted the extra burden of starting and producing *Protozoological Abstracts*. In 1979, she initiated and edited a primary journal, *Systematic Parasitology*, devoted to papers on the taxonomy and systematics of parasites, published by Junk. The activities of the Bureau were greatly expanded and she initiated the taxonomic laboratories to provide a worldwide service for the identification of animal helminths and plant-parasitic nematodes and to undertake taxonomic research. A vast helminth reference collection was started, and the Bureau became a recognized centre for the deposition of type specimens. The library of the Bureau accumulated an enormous number of reference books, journals and reprints, and provided a photocopying service supplying, at short notice, copies of papers and publications. A number of books and other publications, including the *CIH Keys to the Nematode Parasites of Vertebrates*, were produced and edited by her and others. She also persuaded the Natural Environment Research Council to finance the Fisheries Helminthology Unit which she established at the Bureau in 1960, where it remained until it was transferred to Plymouth as part of the Institute for Marine Environmental Research. The Bureau's name and status were changed to the Commonwealth Institute of Helminthology, Commonwealth Institute of Parasitology and, finally, the International Institute of Parasitology.

As Director, she travelled extensively and visited Commonwealth and other countries, where she gave a number of seminars on information services and the work of the Institute and the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (CAB) as a whole. She encouraged contact with Eastern Europe and visited Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and the USSR. She initiated the system of exchange publications with these countries, and this resulted in the exposure of the literature from these countries to other research workers when abstracts of these papers appeared in *Helminthological Abstracts* in English. Her links with Eastern Europe resulted in her editing three volumes of taxonomic monographs produced in English by Czech and Russian scientists.

In retirement, she maintained her contact with parasitology by editing three journals, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, *Journal of Helminthology* and *Systematic Parasitology*. She also maintained her hobbies of gardening, music, reading and travel. She was a founder member of the British Society for Parasitology and was made an Honorary Member of the Society in 1985, an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in 1986, and was a Fellow of the Institute of Biology. In 1984, she was awarded the Leukart Medal presented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Parasitologie.

In 1966, she married James Coventry, a former member of the Executive Council of CAB. He died in 1997.

Sheila made contacts and friends in many countries, and worked very hard to gain the cooperation of parasitologists throughout the world. She will be very sadly missed by her friends and colleagues, but will always be remembered for her kindness and achievements.

Lotfi F. Khalil