

## Anne Brearley

BSc, PhD (UWA)

18<sup>th</sup> September 1949 – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022

### A personal tribute

Anne was a UWA student, research fellow and associate of the Schools of Plant Biology and Biological Sciences, as well as a founding member of The University of Western Australia's Oceans Institute and a long-term member of the Royal Society of Western Australia. She made an outstanding contribution to the University and to the wider community, which was recognised by the award of a Chancellor's Medal in 2006. Anne Brearley passed away surrounded by her family in Albany after a long illness aged 72 on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Annie was a mature age student in the first undergraduate class I taught in 1988. She was special even then. Initially I had little idea of her already impressive skills. Her early fieldtrips with the Western Australia Museum in the 1960s through the State included parts of the Kimberley and the South Coast. Her experience in London in 1974, at the British Museum of Natural History and the Far Eastern Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum gave her a breadth of

knowledge and understanding of the natural world, as well as dealing with people and different systems, both natural and organizational. She was lovely and great fun to be with. Most of all she wanted everyone to share in her wonder at the underwater world and her passion for learning.

Although already well versed in invertebrate biodiversity, she followed me into the depths of seagrass and algae, joining Gary Kendrick (then a fellow student) and myself on research diving trips up and down the coast, from the Pilbara to Shark Bay, down to estuaries on the South Coast to Esperance, Cape Arid and beyond, always keen to see more. More than anything she wanted to make sure everyone gained as much as possible out of a trip and did not miss anything, pointing out all the things we might not have seen—she was a true naturalist.

Her work on seagrass leaf grazing was breakthrough research in our understanding of limnoriid and lynseiid crustacean feeding on seagrass meristems in southern Australia. Her first postdoctoral appointment was with a program studying the ecological significance of seagrasses and their associated invertebrate communities in Cockburn Sound and Owen Anchorage (1997–1999).

She became a well-respected expert on natural systems, particularly estuaries. Her most significant contribution was 'Ernest Hodgkin's Swanland: Estuaries and Coastal Lagoons of South-western Australia'. A magnificent book, which she wrote as single author, clearly showcasing her affiliation with UWA. Published in 2005 it is still the text for understanding wave influenced estuaries in Australia.

Anne was also involved in undergraduate teaching and research supervision. She freely shared her detailed knowledge of marine invertebrate taxonomy and ecology with colleagues, staff and students. As an honorary research fellow she coordinated laboratories and lectured on seagrass ecology and estuaries of Western Australia. She co-supervised several Honours students on the reserve status on invertebrate assemblages, impact of grazers on seagrasses and intertidal invertebrate communities. She stimulated students to think critically, and added significantly to inputs made by formal supervisors.

Anne was also active as a volunteer in the Western Australian Naturalist Club, the Rottneest Island Voluntary Guides, Mandurah Coast Care, Cottesloe Fish Habitat Protection Area & Coast Care, Friends of Allen Park Bushland, Coastal and urban bushland restoration, and undertook community investigations in Esperance Bay. She was a regular attendee and contributor to the Society's talks and symposia.

Professor John Raven, University of Dundee, FRS, FRSE, made frequent visits to UWA in the 1990s. At a dinner at the home of Anne (and husband Reg) in Swanbourne, John commented to Annie, then a PhD



At Cottesloe Beach in 2015 (photo: Angela Rossen).



At the microscope during a 2015 Albany fieldtrip (photo: Angela Rossen).

student, on how impressed he was. She had a life. Not only was she a brilliant student, but she ran a household, organising and bringing up two wonderful boys, Winston and Charlie (then 12 and 10), entertaining in spectacular style, whilst discussing science and literature. When I told him she had died, he observed she was ‘one of the best’.

The scale of Annie’s output on my bookshelves is substantial. Besides her two theses, she contributed to eight Marine Biology Workshops and ten Seagrass Workshop volumes. There are also about ten other books or volumes she added immeasurably to, as well as her own publications. She collaborated with everyone she met and left a substantial legacy as an eminent natural historian.

Annie had an unbridled curiosity about everything and a passion to learn even more—characteristics that stayed with her until late in her life. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to share much of her life over the last 34 years. I will treasure the memories underwater and on land as well as her lasting scientific legacy.

**Vale Anne Brearley.**

**Em Prof D I Walker  
The University of Western Australia**