

Jessie's big botany legacy



PIONEER: Jessie Louisa Hussey, who lived in Goolwa and Port Elliot her whole life, played an important role in early South Australian botany in the 1880s and 1890s.

THE recently-installed Neptune's Pearls sculpture at Continental Park in Port Elliot shines a light on the life of Jessie Hussey, an amateur botanist who made significant contributions to the knowledge of South Australia's flora during the 1890s.

Port Elliot Town and Foreshore Improvement Association members have compiled a biography of Hussey's work and life, with Ruth Miller undertaking the lion's share of the work, supplemented by some of Hussey's relatives, the late Rodney Hussey, his wife Marcia and one of their daughters, Tanya.

Ruth said she had "loved" putting the project together.

"I felt it was important to help share Jessie's story left unfinished by the late Rod Hussey. Rod was unable to complete the story of his great-aunt Jessie in 2014 due to ill health," she said.

Jessica Louisa Hussey was born to Charles and Harriet Hussey at Goolwa in June 1862 and lived her whole life in Goolwa and Port Elliot.

She was affected by poor health; from her late twenties

she was almost deaf. She died in 1899 in Port Elliot, aged 37, and is buried at the Port Elliot/Middleton Cemetery.

She enjoyed collecting marine algae in waters around Port Elliot and later, terrestrial plants across the district. She also used her collections to make small booklets of seaweeds and flowers to sell and raise funds for charity.

In 1893, government botanist Ferdinand Von Mueller sought people to collect species of marine algae for him, and through her father's connections within government, Jessie and Von Mueller began work together.

She had a large collection from local beaches, the hills behind Port Elliot and the hinterland region, including seeds, land plants and flowers, and marine algae.

She was one of three botanists who pioneered investigations in southern South Australia in the 1880s and 1890s. Her two main collaborators were Von Mueller and Jacob Agardh, a Swedish botanist. Over six years, Hussey sent Von Mueller over 2000 specimens, with more sent to Agardh in Sweden.

Hussey exhibited plants and gave presentations and tours through the Field Naturalists' section of the Royal Society of SA, including at Port Elliot. In an 1897 meeting, she read her paper 'Catalogue of the native flora about Port Elliot', listing 355 plants; 25 of these were additions to the region and three were new records for SA.

The year before she died, Hussey became an honorary member of the newly-established Mueller Botanical Society of Western Australia.

Hussey's collections include over 2000 donated to the South Australian museum after her death, collections in the National Herbaria Melbourne, various European herbaria, and over 1000 algal specimens located in Lund, Sweden.

Mueller named *Pimelea husseyana* after Hussey in 1894. It is now called *Pimelea phyllicoides*.

Agardh named two new species after Hussey: *Crysymenia husseyana* and *Pachyglossum husseyana*.

For more about Jessie Louisa Hussey, visit www.portelliott.org.au