

GILBERT REYNOLDS BIOGRAPHY

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Reynolds, Dr Gilbert Westacott (1895–1967)—became an authority on the genus "Aloe" having an extensive knowledge of the genus in the field and under cultivation.



Born in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, on 10 October 1895, Gilbert Westacott Reynolds became an optometrist, a naturalist and an authority on the genus *Aloe*. Gilbert arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa with his parents in 1902, where his father started business as an optician. Gilbert received his education at St John's College (within the University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia) by 1914, where he was the Victor Ludorum (excelling as a chess player). He saw active service during World War I in South West Africa and Nyasaland, reaching the rank of captain. After WWI Gilbert qualified as an optometrist and joined his father's practice in 1921.

Sometime between 1921 and when he started his own practice in 1930, Gilbert developed an intense interest in bulbs and succulent plants of South Africa. From 1930, he was able to travel extensively and eventually narrowed his interest in the *Aloe* genus of plants. During the early years of his research in the *Aloe* genus, he was guided by Dr Inez Clare Verdoorn (1896–1989) and Dr Robert Allen Dyer (1900–1987) from the Botanical Research Institute in Pretoria, South Africa—which eventually led him to become the authority on the genus *Aloe*. He explored and collected *Aloe* plants from all over Africa and Madagascar—sometimes with PRO Bally and others.

Books written by Gilbert Westacott Reynolds during his extensive study of the genus *Aloe* were:

[1950] *The Aloes of South Africa* in English with 520 pages including 77 color plates.

[1954] *The Aloes of Nyasaland* in English with 54 pages.

[1958] *Les Aloes de Madagascar* in French with 156 pages.

[1966] *The Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar* in English with 537 pages including 106 color plates.

He published popular articles in the *Journal of South African Botany*, about his collecting trips to Somaliland, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Madagascar, including many articles in various other botanical journals of the world on the subject of "Aloes".

Two species of succulent plants were named in Gilbert's honor:

Aloe reynoldsii from Eastern Cape, South Africa by Cythna Lindenberg Letty (1895–1985) in 1934.

Delosperma reynoldsii from Free State, South Africa by Mary Gwendolen Lavis (1903–1982) in 1967.

Gilbert named (described) over 70 species of *Aloe*—including species in honor of Important Succulentists Dr Peter René Oscar Bally (1895–1980) in 1953 and Dr Cythna Lindenberg Letty (1895–1985) in 1937.

In 1941 Gilbert received the prestigious Fellow award from the Cactus and Succulent Society of America (CSSA) and became a Fellow of England's Linnean Society in 1951. He also received a honorary doctorate from Cape Town University, South Africa in 1952. In 1966 Gilbert received the Bolus Medal award from the Botanical Society of South Africa in 1966.

In ill health during the 2nd publishing of his 1966 *Aloe* book, Dr Gilbert Westacott Reynolds died at the age of 71 on 7 April 1967.

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