

Press & Journal

ELAINE, 92, IS HONOURED BY UNIVERSITY FOR DECADES OF STUDY INTO PLANT LIFE ON ISLES

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A Botanist who has devoted more than half of her 92 years to the investigation of the flora of Orkney was last night given special recognition for her work.

Despite having no formal botanical qualifications, Elaine Bullard became Orkney's Botanical Recorder after moving to the islands following World War II.

Originally from London, she was sent north by the Milk Marketing Board before taking early retirement at the age of 45 to devote herself to the study of the flora of her new home.

Last night, during a ceremony at the Orkney Islands Council chambers, she was given an honorary degree by Heriot-Watt University.

Speaking before the ceremony, she said she was "flabbergasted" by the award.

The nonagenarian said: "I just wish to goodness I had been young enough to do it properly and study for the degree." Asked why she had first become interested in Orkney's plant life, she said: "It's difficult to avoid - it's so wonderful."

Professor Jonathan Side, director of the Orkney-based Heriot-Watt International Centre for Island Technology, said: "Elaine's work is well known and widely recognised, and it is a particular delight to those of us at Heriot-Watt University, who live and work here on Orkney, that the university wishes to honour her in this way."

"Over the years she has been an inspiration to the university staff and students, and has made an enormous contribution to the work of visiting academics from numerous universities and institutions."

The ceremony marked the first time such an award has been made in Orkney through the university's island campus.