

Margaret Bradshaw
Doctor of Science
Durham Cathedral, 2 July 2024

Margaret Bradshaw was born into an East Yorkshire farming family in 1926. She attended school in Bridlington and later University in Leeds. After training as a teacher, she taught Botany and Zoology in a Bishop Auckland school. In 1951, an encounter with Dr Max Walter (Cambridge University) initiated her study and mapping of rare Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla*) species in Teesdale and Weardale, to the west of us assembled here in Durham today.

Margaret gained a degree of Doctor of Philosophy here at Durham University in 1959 for a thesis on aspects of the morphology and cytology of Lady's-mantles. During this period, she discovered a new species of Lady's mantle for Britain.

After gaining her PhD., Margaret joined the Adult Education Department of the University, meanwhile continuing to study the flora and environment of the North Pennines, giving Botany Classes in Teesdale. She then worked in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at Durham University over the period 1962 to 1983.

In the 1960s Margaret was part of the Teesdale Defence Committee that opposed the damming of the River Tees to form the reservoir at Cow Green that would flood unique habitat supporting rare plant species.

Margaret lives in the dale, now at the age of 98, but in 1983 she moved to a farm in Devon and was employed by the Nature Conservancy Council to study the local rare plants. Here she discovered a species of whitebeam *Sorbus margaretae*, which was named after her, in her honour. Margaret returned to Teesdale in 1998 and continues to monitor plant populations there. She also leads local volunteers through the Teesdale Botany Group that she set up in 2003 and still runs to this day.

In 2017, at the age of 91, conscious that several of the rare species were declining and frustrated by lack of effective action on their conservation, she founded the Upper Teesdale Special Flora Research and Conservation Trust, of which she remains a very active director today.

Fund raising for the trust in recent times has included walking the Great North Run half marathon, riding on horseback 55 miles (the length of the boundary of the area she seeks to conserve) in a series of weekly treks, and, this year, starting on her Birthday in January, walking a mile a day.

Margaret's contributions have been honoured over the years: In 1977 she was made an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours for services to conservation. In 2010 she was awarded honorary membership of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. In 2012 she was awarded the Marsh Botany Award in recognition of her lifetime contribution to the understanding and conservation of the Teesdale flora. In 2013, she was the recipient of the inaugural Pendlebury Award for her significant contribution to looking after the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in 2023 she was awarded the Linnean Society of London's highly prestigious HH Bloomer Award, which is stated to be for an important contribution to natural history and which the recipient should "have pursued their interest out of sheer curiosity and passion."

In short, Margaret Bradshaw embodies boundless curiosity and passion, is a tireless advocate for conservation of a unique flora as well as being a world-expert botanist, enthusiastic teacher of all, whether professional or amateur. Indeed, in 2023, at the age of 97, she published her first book "Teesdale's Special Flora: Places, Plants and People". This got her noticed once again by national television and she has appeared on "Countryfile" in May 2023 as well as on a range of local and national TV programmes.

Graduates, guests, colleagues; Margaret Bradshaw is a shining beacon of the benefits of life-long learning, both for herself and all those she has come into contact with. Her contribution is both immense and significant; it should spur all assembled here to strive, through curiosity and passion, to make such contributions throughout the whole of our adult lives, not just our working careers.

Vice-Chancellor, I present Margaret Bradshaw to receive the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.