



## In memory of Dr. Alison Jolly

Alison Jolly died at home in Lewes, England on February 6<sup>th</sup> aged 76. Though she had been having treatment for breast cancer most of her final five years, nothing slowed down her quiet determination to continue her involvements in Madagascar – to visit her beloved research site at Berenty twice a year, write the six Ako books on lemurs for Malagasy school children and participate in the QMM biodiversity committee and its independent advisory panel to ensure that the mining company fulfilled its pledge to have a net positive impact on the environment around Fort Dauphin. These activities reflected her passionate commitment to conservation in Madagascar, an interest which transformed her study of lemurs, for which she had first come to the country in 1963. She once told her family that the successes of a generation of Malagasy primatologists and ecologists, which she had helped nurture, were far more precious to her than her books. In the final months of her life, she edited her diaries on all these activities in a book which has been published by Zed Books – *Thank You Madagascar: Conservation Diaries of Alison Jolly*.

Alison was devoted to her family - Richard, her husband of 50 years and her four children Margareta, Susan, Arthur and Richard B. She made special time for her four grandchildren, including writing six adventure stories about time travel in Lewes, originally for Frances, her nine year old granddaughter, but later published by Pomegranate Press as the Fiddle stories.

Disliking competition and assuming that she needed to make time for her children, Alison had always shunned seeking a tenured university position, though she held research positions and taught in the universities of Cambridge, Sussex, Rockefeller and Princeton. She was given honorary degrees in the Universities of Antananarivo and Turin as well as being given a lifetime achievement award by the International Primatological Society and being awarded the Osman Hill medal by the Primatological Society of Great Britain. *Microcebus jollyae*, a mouse lemur, was named after her and at the time of her death and also a section of replanted forest near Fort Dauphin.

A truly astonishing outpouring of obituaries followed her passing, including the New York Times, the Times of London, the Telegraph, the Guardian, the Economist and Science. The obituary of the Telegraph includes two YouTube clips of interviews with Alison. Perhaps most movingly to us, her family, the BBC's Last Word radio obituary programme made vivid her warm lilting voice as she described the soft purr of the ringtailed lemurs. We still hear her voice, and it tells us to continue to care, as best we can, about the brilliant, interwoven life, culture and land of Madagascar.

- the Jolly family

*photo of Ft Dauphin sunset: © Debbie Custance;  
original image has been 'watermarked' above.*

