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# OBITUARIES

## Mrs Valerie Finnis: Renowned gardener and photographer

A WORLD-RENOWNED gardener and photographer, who was a teacher for many years at the Waterperry Horticultural School for Women, near Wheatley, has died, aged 81.

Alpine plants expert Valerie Finnis was born in Crowborough, Sussex, on October 31, 1924.

She died on October 17 in Kettering, Northamptonshire.

She started her life as a botanist there as an 18-year-old student in 1942.

During this time, she learnt how to drive a tractor and a lorry, which was used to get their home-grown blackcurrants and potatoes to the Covered Market, in Oxford, and crates of Waterperry apples and pears up to Covent Garden in London.

Mrs Finnis developed a passion for photography in the 1950s when she acquired her first camera from Wilhelm Schacht, the curator of the Munich Botanic Garden.

She used the same Rolleiflex camera for 40 years, and was one of the first women in the UK to specialise in photographing plants and gardens.

In 1963, Mrs Finnis broke a record by becoming the first person to gain three awards in the same day from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Such was her expertise that in the following year she became the first woman botanist to be asked by Sir Mortimer Wheeler

to lecture on flowers during a cruise around the Greek islands.

In 1966, she was invited to Holland by the British Ambassador to talk to members of the Netherlands-England Society.

She also gave a lecture to leading horticulturists at the British Embassy in Hague.

In 1970, Mrs Finnis met her husband-to-be, fellow gardening lover Sir David Scott, a cousin of the eighth Duke of Buccleuch.

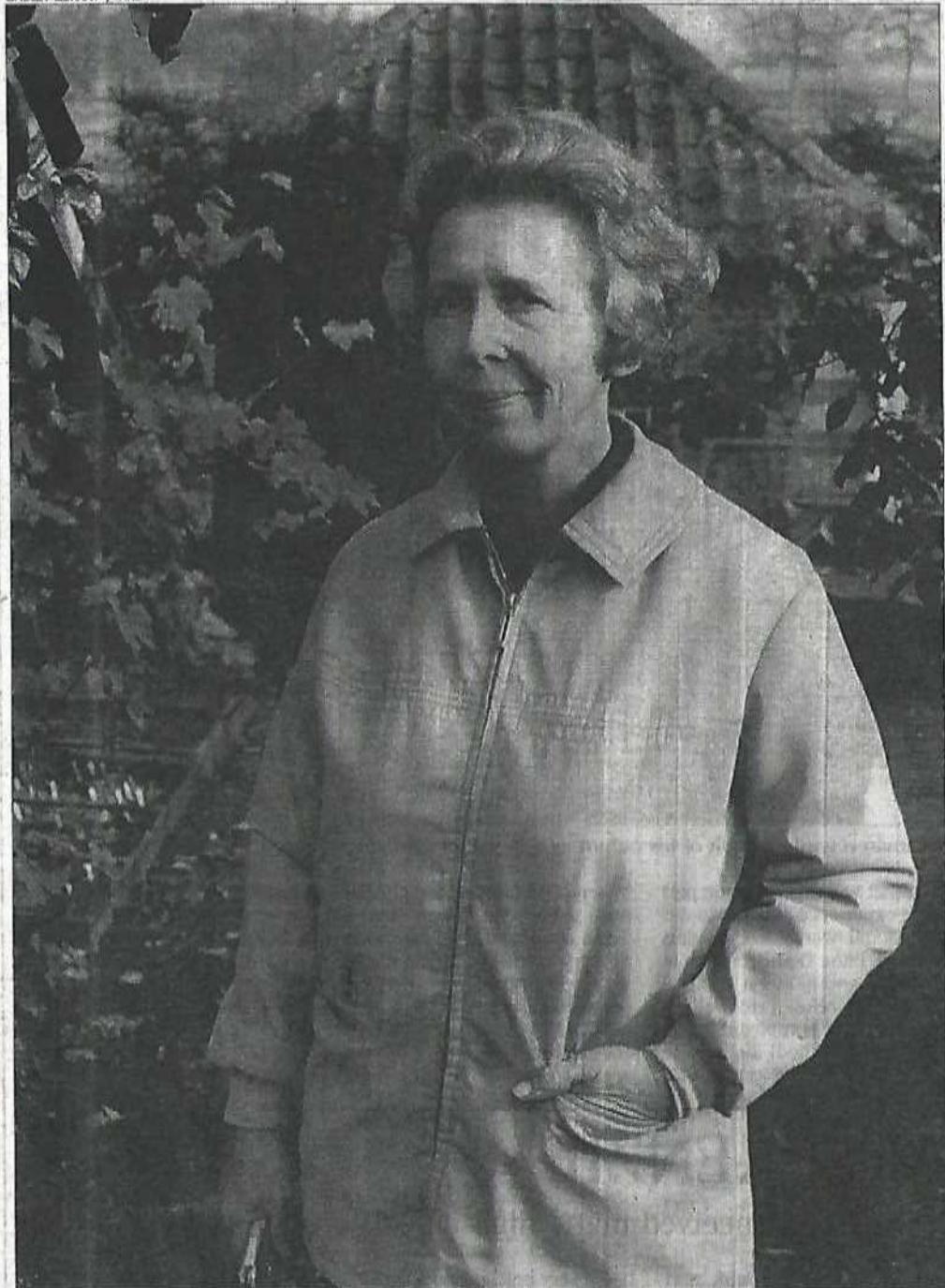
After retiring from the Foreign Office, he had spent 40 years cultivating his spectacular garden at the Dower House of Boughton House in Northamptonshire.

Her treasured collection of alpinists went with her to Dower House when they married, when she was 46 years old and he was aged 82. For the next 16 years the Scotts worked together developing and caring for the garden.

Mrs Finnis served on a variety of prestigious plant committees of the Royal Horticultural Society and in 1975 was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour.

She did not have children, but set up a trust in memory of her husband's late and only son Merlin, who was killed in North Africa in 1941.

The trust gives grants to young gardeners who need money for projects or travel associated with their studies.



Having joined Waterperry Horticultural School for Women during the war years, Finnis was by the 1950s working as a lecturer on television. Inset, her Muscari 'Valerie Finnis'