

A living legacy

Like many of us, Lilian Valder joined Forest and Bird with a desire to help preserve New Zealand's unique natural environment. In an extraordinary way during her full life – and also after her death last year at the age of 90 – she was able to assist in the protection of the native plants and wildlife she cared about.

Born in 1911, Lilian signed up as a foundation life member of the Forest and Bird Society when still a young adult. She trained in secretarial practice and accounting, and worked with her father on his extensive philanthropic activities, including assisting men onto derelict dairy farms. In the early 1930s she joined her oldest sister Mollie on a sheep and drystock farm on the southern slopes of Mt Pirongia in the Waikato, living for nearly 20 years without electricity. It was an unconventional move, but then Lilian was in many ways ahead of her time. She was also very practical, and as well as making bread and soap she was equally competent with an axe or a butcher's knife. She had no qualms about shooting possums from her kitchen window and then boiling up the carcasses for her pets.

She was more than capable of running the farm, and often helped muster, dag and crutch sheep on the neighbouring property belonging to Walter Scott, husband of noted author Mary Scott. When Walter's health declined it is said that Lilian spent some time practising on her own arm before administering injections for the ailing Walter.

Walter was also a keen conservationist and after he died in 1960 Lilian and Mollie expressed their concern for the felling of large areas of forest by gifting some 100 acres of native bush along with £500 for fencing and maintenance of the appropriately named Walter Scott Reserve in 1963.

The following year Lilian found she 'had trouble pulling the sheep out of the pen' so decided to 'retire' to a bach at Waihi beach, but her efforts to help others didn't cease. Instead she established two trusts which over the next twenty years were to distribute over \$2 million to a variety of charities, including the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

She also didn't let up on her campaign against possums, and was often called up to kill possums caught in traps by local residents.



Lilian Valder

Lilian was active in tree-planting, revegetation and predator control, and in her later years she maintained an interest in how her donations were spent, taking pleasure in visiting reserves and covenanted private land. Those who met her describe a remarkable woman with a lively, intelligent and stimulating personality.

Three questions guided her actions: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? In 1993 she received the MBE for services to the community. Before she died she agreed that the Waikato branch annual grants be named the Valder Conservation Grants in her honour.

Lilian's life and work has been an inspiration to many, and her legacy has made a significant contribution to the protection of New Zealand's natural heritage in helping projects, research and people.



KCC members
planting trees in
Walter Scott Reserve

*You too can leave
a living legacy
by remembering
Forest and Bird
in your Will.*

To receive a bequest pack contact

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Walter Scott Reserve