

Obituary: Frances Cawood Duguid

Alan Esler

The life of Frances Duguid spanned most of the century except for half a dozen years at each end. Her interest in plants developed early when there was still much native vegetation around Levin. The first dated record of a botanical observation was 1916. In her eighties Frances published her “Botany of northern Horowhenua lowlands, North Island, New Zealand” in *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 28: 381-437, 1990.

The big lift to her botanical interest came when Frances met Lucy Moore (two months her senior) in 1941, and she developed a lasting liaison with a wide circle of botanists. Frances recalled that she was not a foundation member of the Levin Native Flora Club but we know that she was its foundation for half a century. Frances had Lucy’s knack of withholding her knowledge while others framed their thoughts on the matter in hand – often the name of a plant. Field notes were good, voucher specimens were taken with discretion, her thoroughness was exemplary, and her memory incredible. Many will remember her articles and displays of native plants and weeds, and the meetings and field trips of the Flora Club.

Frances’s life was not all botany. She was a farmer’s wife, a loving mother of two, and though dogged with asthma, worked steadily for Girl Guides, the church and many other Levin activities.

I was one of the many who learnt from her example that good science is not the prerogative of scientists.

Peculiar Growth of Lancewood

Frances Duguid¹

A lancewood tree of peculiar growth is on top of a bank above the Makahika Stream. It is growing at an angle of c. 20° below horizontal. Either the tree survived after being thrown into this position by a storm, or perhaps erosion of the edge of the terrace may have been the cause of its downfall. It would appear to have been a mature tree at the time of the throw, with a branched head developed. Following this event, either all the branches turned round to a vertical position, or else only the “upper” branches survived. Certainly, all at the outer tip are pointing upwards and are of a much branched form. Nearer the root end, a strong new trunk has shot up, this having reached a compact branched form, suggesting that it could be something like 15–20 years old. The tree was seen in autumn 1964.

¹ Deceased. Formerly Aroha Lodge, Te Whanau, PO Box 213, Levin.