

Jolyon Christopher Manning

4 October 1933 – 9 April 2018

High on Bridge Hill, above Alexandra, there is a 6 ha semi-arid, semi-natural public reserve with fine specimen trees and shrubs, protected by a QEII covenant and used for recreation and reflection by the wider community. This is Jolendale Park (“Jol” for Jolyon, and “en” for Enny) – the living legacy of Jolyon Christopher Manning (Fig. 1) and his wife Enny.



Fig. 1 Jolyon Manning enthusiastically works among the trees at Jolendale Park.

Jolyon, who died at Ranui Home in Alexandra aged 84 on 9th April 2018, was widely regarded as a man of many enthusiasms and great community vision. The park is the result of 58 years of plantings and stewardship – the manifestation of a deeply held intention to leave the earth a better place.

Born in Gore, Southland, on 4th October 1933, Jolyon was educated at Waihopai School, Māori Hill School, Otago Boys’ School, Southland Boy’s High School and the University of Otago. He was then directed into accountancy training at J.S. McInnes & Sons in Dunedin by his father, Arthur Manning, a journalist.

Although Jolyon had a lifelong interest in numbers and statistics, his true passions were many and varied, including meteorology, forestry and hydrology, as well as a deep love of classical music. His mother, Marjorie, was an accomplished pianist and teacher in Dunedin, and his father wrote concert reviews

for local papers. Jolyon himself sang in St Paul’s Cathedral choir in Dunedin for 27 years and built an extensive library of high-quality music recordings, many of which were later donated to the University of Otago.

It was a great source of regret for him that he was denied the opportunity to choose his own vocation but true to his lifelong motto, “opportunity oriented, not problem focused”, Jolyon soon redirected his energies towards fields of more personal interest.

Throughout his life, Jolyon was a strong advocate for Otago. He held many positions of public office and had a particular gift for being able to take a wider perspective on an issue, informed by his broad interests. A confident and articulate speaker, he was known for his well thought-out and passionate views. He actively participated in public consultation processes and frequently wrote submissions and newspaper articles, attended many public meetings and hearings, focusing particularly on issues of regional development, employment, tourism and forestry.

Jolyon’s promotion of the Otago region began with his work in the Otago Visitor Centre. He became well-known for leading summer walks in and around Dunedin, highlighting the area’s natural beauty. He had a great belief in the region and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Otago Council Inc. (forerunner of the Otago Regional Council) for which he was chief executive for nearly two decades. He also served a term as a Dunedin city councillor and his 1971 book, *Focus on Otago*, highlighted trends and growth opportunities in the region.

In addition, Jolyon held leadership roles and positions of office in many organisations local and national, including the NZ Institute of Forestry, Men of the Trees, NZ Tree Crops Association, Otago Chamber of Commerce, Dunedin Arts Council, the Youth Hostel Association of NZ and the NZ Tourism Board. He also was an active member of the Anglican Church for most of his life and a lay canon and people’s warden.

His community engagement began at a young age and he met his wife Enny on a working bee on Quarantine Island in Otago Harbour. Mrs Manning (nee Waal) was a young house surgeon at the time, having migrated from Indonesia as a Dutch refugee after the war years. The couple married on 16th May 1959, in Old St Paul’s in Wellington and had three children, Marina, Christopher and William.

Their early married life quickly became a balancing act between two busy careers, three children and regular commutes to and from Alexandra to establish a “neighbour wood” park for all.

Although characterised by beautiful schist outcrops, the land was arid and covered with dense sweet briar when they bought it in the early 1960s. The challenge was to plant species that could withstand the extremes of the Alexandra climate, both drought and frost. For many years Jolyon kept detailed meteorological records for the park and wrote a monthly research update of the trial plantings for the New Zealand Forest Service.

He read about the shelterbelt plantings for the dust bowl in the United States and contacted the US Forest Service, from which he imported seeds to be propagated at the New Zealand Forest Service nursery in Milton. Any saplings surplus to requirement at Jolendale were donated for experimental plantings around the South Island as well as for beautification plantings around the new hydro dams. In 1995 the Mannings received an environmental award from the Otago Regional Council for creating the park.

The couple retired to Alexandra in the 1990s and became highly involved in local community affairs.

Malcolm Macpherson, mayor of Central Otago from 2001 to 2010, said Jolyon might have been the most frequent visitor to council meetings and hearings. “You could almost bet on it that if there was an opportunity to make a submission on a significant local issue, Mr Manning

would be there with a point of view, almost without fail. He was certainly a personality – engaging, striking. You knew Jolyon was part of the conversation or in the room”.

In 2000, Jolyon, a lifelong member of the NZ Arboricultural Association, received the sixth Ronald Flook Award for tree care, an honour he was particularly proud of (Fig. 2). The beginning of his citation reads: “Jolyon is a most worthy recipient who, in relentless effort pioneered the creation of Jolendale Research Parklands, a tree landscape in one of the most arid areas of New Zealand. His work has attracted many visitors from New Zealand and overseas. Jolendale is the culmination of plant wisdom, faithful and detailed weather recordings over many years and the interpretation of this knowledge in the establishment of the park.”

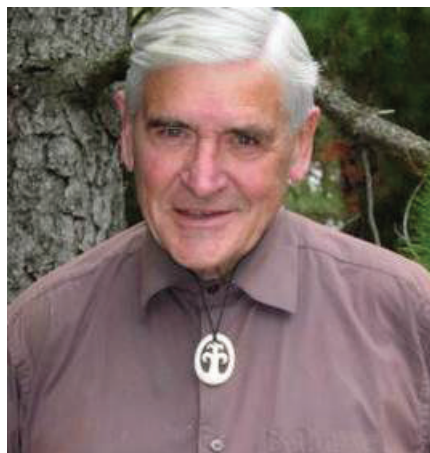


Fig. 2 Jolyon Manning wears the Ronald Flook Award bone carving he received from the New Zealand Arboricultural Association in 2000 in recognition of his care of trees, which his family says he was “extremely proud” of.

In 2004, Jolendale Park became protected with a QEII covenant and in 2010 was given to the Alexandra community, managed by the Jolendale Charitable Trust of which Dr Macpherson was the inaugural chairman.

“For years to come, people will look back at the Mannings’ contribution to inland Otago and to the whole subject of tree and shrub husbandry in New Zealand, and Jolendale will be one of the shining lights,” Dr Macpherson said.

In later years, the Mannings extended their plantings to include roadside reserves in Gorge Creek and Champagne Gully beside Lake Dunstan.

More recently, as his health and eyesight failed, Jolyon again drew closer to his first love, music, and found comfort in the natural environment of his beloved park.

Jolyon Manning is survived by his wife Enny, their three children and four grandchildren.

Obituary adapted with permission from the *Otago Daily Times*, 16 June 2018, with contributions from Enny Manning and Frank Buddingh’

A range of photographs taken at Jolendale Park. Images courtesy of Enny Manning and www.jolendale.com.

