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**SUMMIT ROAD SOCIETY INC**

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

**ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD 2012/13**

At this time of year I usually look forward to writing a report to inform the members of the activities throughout the year that the Society has been involved with. Accompanied with that is to report in detail positive outcomes. Unfortunately this year has been another one of frustrations and very little progress in advancing from the setbacks we suffered as a result of those two earthquakes that inflicted obvious damage but leave us with the situation that we are now face with accepting the threat of unknown damage to the Port Hills that could be a realised sometime in the future. This situation affects our Society owned land, in particular the most affected Ohinetahi due to having extensive rock outcrops almost completely along the summit. The Society is simply not in a position to ignore the potential of further damage both in a financial and human interest situation.

There must be a solution to this problem, in the meantime the position held by the Board is one that we feel we have no alternative to but adopt one of caution at the moment to protect ourselves and the public even though it means that we suffer criticism from others, coupled with the fact that there are others who ignore our directive and use the tracks against our advice. There is comfort in the knowledge that there is still a considerable part of the Port Hills closed to the public due to the same reasons that we have taken into consideration to make our decisions so far.

But the year has not been all downside there are a few positives that have taken place. Omahu escaped almost completely with Gibraltar Rock only having a few minor problems with a couple of rocks that posed a problem if there was another earthquake. Thanks to Nick Singleton and the experience he has gained by working with the geo-tech engineers he was able to assist in identifying these hazards and recommend solutions. Gibraltar Rock has been proposed as an alternative to the now unusable Castle Rock by the Alpine Club N Z.

Arbor Day went ahead as usual with the children successfully planting the allocated trees under the watchful eye of Ann Kennedy and the ever present Di Carter and her team.

The Work Parties East-Enders, Ohinetahi and Omahu have again excelled themselves in their dedication to the environment of the Port Hills. There can only be admiration for these people who must have been devastated after the earthquakes to see most of their toil and effort over the past years destroyed in some places beyond recognition. But these hardy and dedicated people saw the result of the earthquakes as a challenge and have responded magnificently there are a number of tracks that have been reopened sooner than what would normally be the case due solely to the dedication of the people who make up our Work parties. I take my hat off to them and so do many others It is a pity that most of the people who use the tracks are unaware of our work parties so probably do not give much thought regarding the maintenance of the tracks and the vast amount of voluntary labour that goes towards them. To them the important part is the tracks are there and can be accessed.

The Leaders of the work parties will be presenting their own reports so I do not want to deny them the privilege of reporting to you their achievements during the year. Except to say that the numbers are dropping and ways will have to found to find new members for these working parties. I am certain that there are a vast number of potential work party members available to us the major task is finding them.

Experience has proven that those who make the effort to join the work parties continue on for a number of reasons. Doing something for the good of the environment, plus making a contribution to enable others to appreciate and enjoy openness and naturalness of the Port Hills. The physical part is good for the system, being out in the open air is stimulating and most of all the camaraderie amongst the party members has been fundamental to their success. Unfortunately members move on mostly due to age creeping up on them and they feel they can no longer participate as in the past. Whatever the reason for an individual member’s discontinuance as a work party member, the Society as a whole is always grateful for their contribution no matter how insignificant they may think it has been. Our challenge is to find replacements willing to take on this commitment if for nothing else to provide them with a newfound sense of purpose that has its own rewards that are as varied as the individuals themselves.

One member who has moved on and has been a wonderful supporter of the Society is Geoff Bendall. Geoff has moved back to his home town and his family but he will always be constantly reminded of the Port Hills as the Rangers presented him with an Eastenders Track sign that will no doubt be placed in a prominent position at his new home. The volunteer hours has maintained a steady average which is commendable when consideration of the circumstances of restricted access is taken into account.

Our membership at the end of 2012 is 377 paid up members plus we have memberships of groups such as Tramping Clubs, Walking Groups, Environmental Groups and others who have a passion for the Port Hills environment. The combined membership of these groups and that of the Society gives us a fairly substantial membership that carries a significant voice should it need to be used. The Board has approved several applications for membership during the year so there is a public awareness of the Society of what it stands for and the work it does. Once again our members have been recognised for their efforts in conservation with an award going to Ohinetahi Work Party. The award this year to Anne and her team was by Weedbusters recognising the effort put into the control of undesirable weeds in Ohinetahi. I will let Anne expand on the award itself.

The Board and the Society are extremely proud of achievements of our work parties there does not seem to be a year go by without and award of some type or another presented to the dedicated members.

I mentioned in last year’s report that Christchurch City was changing the method of payment to the Society and others organisations of similar nature to reduce the complicated method of assessment that was used to determine payments as part of the overall recreation budget. I am pleased to report that the method has been implemented and is working a treat making life for the Secretary a lot easier. Thanks have to go to Paul Devlin who was the original proposer of this system.

Mentioning Paul is an opportune time to again thank the entire Ranger team for their co-operation during the past year. We have again been able to use their headquarters for our board meetings and the regular attendance at all our meetings keeps us up to date on the happenings that are taking place on the Port Hills. It is pleasing and satisfying to note that considerable progress is being made to restore some sort of normality within the entire Port Hills area. Progress is slow but it is very positive in some areas. Tonight we are privileged to have Nick Singleton here to give us a talk about what has happened, the frustrations and the plans for the future not only the tracks and open space but the buildings associated with the Port Hills so that people may again use all the facilities available to them.

I did mention that we were going to trial metal signs to gauge their effectiveness re vandalism and longevity but we had a couple of hiccups along the way. Finally I can report they are being made up and should be in place in the near future. So it is not just cheese that takes a long time mature. I am looking forward to seeing what galvanised signs look like when they are in place. They certainly will not have that natural look but if they are successful in their permanency I am sure they will be an acceptable permanent addition to our properties.

I am the Society’s representative on the Mount Vernon Trust Board who are a sister organisation and they are having similar problems with opening some of their tracks due to the unknown factor of possible rock displacement. Mount Vernon is on the City Side of the Port Hills and it is well known that this side of the hills fared a little better than the Port side such as Ohinetahi. Still there are problems and they are like ourselves taking a precautious approach to the problem. One of the major problems they are dealing with is the same as we face and that is people ignoring and in some cases removing the warning signs and venturing onto the land. Coupled with this problem is one we hope we never have to face and that is determining the responsibility if an accident happens and someone is injured or even a fatality occurs. It is a sure bet that there will be criticism from the affected families that the owners of the land are at fault. Neither organisation is in a position to financially to face this problem we simply have to rely on the fact that we are doing our best to inform people that there is the probability of possible danger that is why we have acted the way we have.

Board meetings are still being held at the Ranger Headquarters in Victoria Park. This is now becoming permanent and it works well for the Board and the Rangers who attend our meetings. It means a little more travel for the Board members but it is compensated that we are not constantly aware of the timeframe set to vacate the building at the Beckenham Service Centre. I am sure it suits the rangers as well especially Nick who lives at Little River so he has less distance to travel home.

Once again I wish to express my thanks to the Board for their commitment over the past year under very trying and frustrating times. It often seems that we are making very little progress and the traditional activities of the Society have been forgotten such as a mid-winter dinner and outings related to the Port Hills where members can enjoy the company of others with similar interests.

Our Secretary John Goodrich has again served the Society well carrying out his duties continuing with the same enthusiasm and advice even though he is under some considerable stress due to the fire that destroyed his home and the delay in the rebuild. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank you John, from all members of the Board. Mention must go to our Treasurer who keeps an ever watchful eye on the finances of both the Society and the Harry Ell Trust. Thank you Paul I am sure that all members of the Society appreciate the work you do for us. Finally I must thank my Vice President Jeremy who again has been a fine example of the position he holds. Always there if needed to take up the reins in my absence, ready to give advice and a willing member of the Eastenders, so he is a man that practices what he preaches.

When everything is taken into consideration we have had a successful year even if only a little progress has been made in opening up our land to the public this is well and truly compensated by the contribution made by the voluntary effort through the work parties to assist the Christchurch City Rangers in the marvellous progress they have made on restoration of the city owned land. This achievement alone makes me and all the Society members proud to be involved in some way of the first local Environmental organisation in Christchurch.

Thank You,

Bill woods.

President