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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING; 27th March 2013**

**WORK PARTY REPORTS**

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Eastenders: Annual Report – 2012

The past year has seen a few changes in the team. One of the biggest was that Geoff Bendall left us after 20 years in the team, including 8 as convenor, to live nearer to family in Tauranga. He will be sorely missed for his organisational abilities, his boundless enthusiasm and not least his sense of humour.

The Eastenders presently comprises 31 hardy souls, which is down on previous years. This year we have seen the retirement of 5 members and the recruitment of one. Three of those who retired had willing minds, however, their bodies were not quite as accommodating, whilst the other two left for warmer climes and to be nearer family.

We continued to work closely with the park rangers, and the majority of the workdays were around the Victoria Park area of the hills and south of the Sign of the Kiwi due to the continued closure of tracks nearer to our home base. My thanks to Ranger Hamish Masters who has supplied us with jobs, has worked with us on most of our days out and who has raised all our cholesterol levels with his magnificent muffins!

The work completed has been varied, starting the year off with drain clearing in Victoria Park and then moving on improving the Mt Vernon and Marley’s Hill tracks. Next was broom control on the Harry Ell walkway for a few outings and then track clearing on the Crater Rim walkway. After heavy rain in August we donned gumboots to clear a slip on Cedric’s Track, just above the Kiwi. This job looked like a small one and, of course, turned into a big one trying to shovel piles of sodden clay off the track and re-benching to take the water away. Then we moved on to the Crater Rim walkway heading south from the Kiwi, working on the walkway itself and also several tracks running off it. More gorse and broom control coupled with general tidying up. In November we moved onto the tracks down into Kennedy’s Bush, cutting back the growth that was threatening to obscure the track and benching where needed. To finish the year we returned to Victoria Park and the Harry Ell walkway, trimming growth and clearing drains. The last workday of the year was rounded off with a BBQ at the rangers HQ in the park. Despite the need to travel further from home base we managed good turnouts ranging from 8 to 19 on any given day. Over the year we worked a total of 947 hours and only had to cancel three workdays due to weather.

As well as Hamish, I would like to pass on sincere thanks to Nick Singleton and all the staff at Port Hills Rangers for their help, support and last but not least allowing us to use their facilities during the year for Geoff’s farewell and for our end-of-year BBQ. They also generously supplied us with the food for these occasions which was appreciated by all.

Finally it looks as if this coming year we will be able to get back to working on the tracks closer to home – ie the east – which will please most of our team. We are always on the lookout for new members and if interested in joining our group please give me a call.

Paul Tebbutt March 2013

**Ohinetahi Work Party: Annual Report – 2012**

This year has seen the usual pattern of activity at Ohinetahi Reserve. Despite still being restricted by its closure a small team has continued to maintain the Reserve while observing the Board’s request to keep to safe areas and away from bluffs.

 Mother Nature dictates what and when we do things at Ohinetahi Reserve. From November to mid-January we are busy weed-eating and clearing spring growth from the tracks. After that as the days get hot we “go bush’, especially in the lower parts of the reserve that are near residential areas. Old Man’s Beard begins flowering about this time and despite our continued efforts we are still finding plenty of this pest. Though we are not finding such large pest trees of species like cherry, spindleberry, berberis, yew and hawthorn we can still find plenty of seedlings. Autumn can be the undoing of these plants as they put on their colourful tints making them easier to spot amongst the natives. This is the time to prune back the blackberries so the long new season’s growths don’t root. Winter and Spring finds us benching and improving tracks, planting trees in appropriate places and clearing the grass from our previous plantings. Robin Collie, Mike White and Tony Edney continue looking after bait stations and traps for possums, rats and mustelids. About every 4 weeks the maintenance team also visits the south end of O’Farrell’s Track to check the on the bait stations in that area.

The highlight of this year would have to be gaining the premier Weed Busters award in recognition of our continued effort to control weed pests. Not just the present group but previous members of our work party can feel proud of the effort they have put in as they have all contributed to the health of the bush. We received prizes of gloves, possum bait and weed-killer. However the best prize was to have a group of lecturers and post graduate students from Lincoln University give us a day of their time to clear a patch of broom near the bottom of Cass Ridge track. We intend to plant this area in flax and natives this year to try and contain the broom’s spread.

Anne Kennedy March 2013

Omahu Bush: Annual Report - 2012

The Omahu Bush Reserve has blossomed this year due to a number of factors. The excellent rains in winter and early spring set up the bush for good growth whilst the continuing emphasis on the control of pests and weeds seem to be paying off. If that sounds as if we are left with nothing to do this year, then nothing could be further from the truth!

The best bit of news we had was regarding Prendergast’s Track and the track up to Gibraltar Rock. After inspection and some discussions we decided that the risk of rockfall could be mitigated by placing signs either side of where the track sidles under the south side of Gibraltar Rock, warning of the rock fall hazard. These are under way and will be installed as soon as we have them.

The other piece of good news was that we were successful in our application to Selwyn District Council for funds in their contestable Environment Fund to the tune of just under $5000. These funds are being used to purchase tools, traps and equipment to help us in the control of pests and weeds.

Out of our base of 24 who volunteered to be Friends of Omahu we have a small team of 5 or 6 who regularly turn up on alternate Fridays for a day’s work. Over the past year we managed a total of 589 hour’s work on a variety of jobs in both the bush block and the grazed block. Needless to say gorse control has once again topped our list of activities and we spent several days working the grazed block and around Gibraltar Rock following up on the previous 12 months work.

Gorse control has also been necessary along the fence lines, especially on the boundaries and is an on-going job. Broom is less of a problem, only rearing its head in a couple of sites down near the waterfall and on Rhodes track. Other weeds found include Elderberry, Darwin’s Barberry and Himalayan Honeysuckle, however, only in small numbers as in previous years.

Apart from weed control we have been steadily working our way along up from the waterfall on the ‘Track-With-No-Name’ that runs from the stream up to the junction with Kirk’s track. Down the bottom we have had to re-build part of the track where it has eroded away from the bank. Further up we have spent many days widening the track and cutting back the (rather wonderful) re-growth that has occurred this year. Rhodes’ Track has had its share of attention too. The heavy rains in August caused a slip near the bottom which necessitated some reasonably major earthworks with rocks, shoring up the down side of the track and digging a substantial drain on the up side to take water away. Work on Kirk’s Track has consisted of re-benching the track in places and cutting back growth. Prendergast’s Track has had little work due to the closure. Gorse growing within the track will need to be sprayed in the spring.

Due to the wet spring the grass growth on Rhodes’ and Prendergast’s Tracks was much more aggressive than in previous years and in the end we cut the tracks three times between October and the end of the year. My thanks to the Park Rangers for their invaluable help in this task. Their new track mower did the job in a fraction of the time we could have done it with brush-cutters. The brush-cutters did have plenty of work to do in the smaller areas within the bush though.

With regard to pest control, Ben Furjan has been busy with his work on the larger pests. Three deer, five pigs and twenty possums have been removed from the bush area and along with that my traps did away with 5 rats, 5 stoats and 14 hedgehogs. The grazing continues with the same lessee and a good job continues to be done, with the silver tussock thriving. The slip area is being monitored and is slowly recovering, especially at the top near the road.

We continue to have problems with vandalism and graffiti in the Gibraltar Rock car park. Unwanted junk dumped there last year included a dead calf, various car parts including a radio and dashboard, garden waste and the inevitable bottles and cans. The signpost at the entry to the bush has been graffitied many times and is now to be replaced with a metal sign, along with a larger one at the car park entrance.

My thanks to all those who have helped this year and a special thank you to the Park Rangers for all their help and advice.

Paul Tebbutt March 2013