

## *PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008*

2008 was the Society's 60th anniversary year and what a privilege it was to have our founder John Jameson, Harry Ell's grandson very much part of the celebrations to provide that historic link back to the visionary who first recognised the value of the natural environment of the Port Hills. And it was heartening to hear John state at the celebration book launch in December that the Society is stronger now than it has ever been - and he should know.

### **CELEBRATIONS**

We celebrated our anniversary year with four Sunday walks covering various areas of the Hills in April, followed by a fine midwinter dinner at the Takahe in June with Lachie Griffen providing entertainment with his stories of the past and John and his family cutting the anniversary cake. Celebrations were rounded off in December with the production and launching of our new booklet, "Port Hill-Protect and Enjoy" with a fine garden party at the Takahe in December. As 2008 was also the 100th anniversary of the "turning of the first sod" commencing the construction of the Summit Road this was also celebrated at the same time with the planting of a kowhai seedling by John Jameson. Later in April this year a small plaque will be unveiled near the spot where the event took place on 28 November 1908.

### **OUR NEW BOOKLET**

Perhaps the major effort during the year was the publication of our new booklet. This is a family-friendly publication fitting between Gordon Ogilvie's books on the Port Hills and the maps and brochures produced by the City Council. Grateful thanks go to the publishing team of Sandra Burns, project manager, Joanna Orwin, writer, Sandra Parkkali, designer and Nick Groves, photographer for this attractive booklet for the promotion of the Port Hills and the Society. Also thanks to our sponsors' help in financing the publication: The NZ Lotteries Grants Board, Ground Effect, Holcim and the Governors Bay Community Association. The successful launch is well recorded in our recent newsletter with Joe Bennett kindly offering to do the honours.

### **WORK PARTIES**

Our volunteer work parties remain the "backbone" of the Society. The Eastenders continue to grow in membership and strength. They are a happy and friendly bunch of men who get through a mountain of work on City Council Reserves and elsewhere on the Hills. They are an important link we have with the Port Hills Ranger staff and it is mainly through their work that the Council provides us with a substantial annual grant. Geoff Bendall the group co-ordinator needs a big thank you from the Society for the work needed in off-the-hill, planning and organising the work parties. The small Ohinetahi team remains dedicated to the management of our Reserve. Recent new members have improved the gender balance and reduced the average age to a small degree - both positive signs! The Weekenders who are made up of volunteers still in the work force have been in recess in recent times no doubt due to work and family pressures but they expect to get underway again this year. They are on the look out for a new co-ordinator to replace our Secretary, John.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communications generally, and our relationship with the general public is an important aspect of the Society's endeavours. I list below some of our avenues we have in connecting with the outside:

- We value the strong links we have with the City Council through the Port Hills Rangers ably lead by Paul Devlin. It is encouraging working with his dedicated team and supporting each other in our common objective of protecting and enhancing the natural environment of the Port Hills.
- Links with the greater Banks Peninsula is also important to us. We attend the vibrant Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust's meetings and forums and exchange newsletters. This year the Board approved small donations to the Hinewai Reserve and the Tui Restoration Trust of Banks Peninsula.
- Many local tramping clubs and walking groups are members of our Society some in a reciprocal arrangement. From time to time we are in receipt of small donations from them in acknowledgement of our work on the Hills.
- The Society is a member of several like organisations including Forest and Bird, the Horticultural Society, the Botanical Society and Waihora Ellesmere Trust.
- Some of our members man the Victoria Park Visitor Centre on Sunday afternoons to assist the public and to increase their awareness of the Society.
- Arbor Day plantings by school children is and important annual event. It is jointly organised and funded with the Hill rangers and is a valuable education activity.
- We have a member representing the Society on the Port Hills Park Trust Board (Mt. Vernon Reserve) and another on the Summit Road Protection Advisory Committee.

All these links and associations help to improve the public awareness of the Society and the importance of the Port Hills. However, much more needs to be done especially amongst the younger members of the community who make good use of the Port Hills for recreation. While our membership continues to grow it is quite small compared with the number of locals enjoying the hills.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Doug Meherne is a foundation member of the Eastenders and a very loyal supporter of the Society. He and his family lived on Clifton Hill for many years and are true environmentalists who love our hills. This year he expressed his support in a very tangible way, by donating to the Harry Ell Trust fund a substantial sum in the form of Bonus Bonds. We sincerely thank him for supporting this fund for the purpose of future acquisitions of reserve land and for his commitment to the Society for so many years. Thanks also go to our other financial supporters, the City and Selwyn Councils and our sponsors for the booklet and expenses associated with Ohinetahi Reserve.

Tonight I step down as President of our Society. It has been a privilege to have held the position for four years and I thank the Society for granting me that honour. I took over the position from long standing President Maurice McGregor who gave a much improved professionalism to the Society. With that foot plate and the excellent support I have had from the Board and in particular our Secretary, John Goodrich, it has been a relatively easy ride. John Goodrich has been our first Executive Secretary and has held the post for six years. As I've said in each of my annual reports, the Society and I owe him a big thank you for his efficiency and professionalism and overall commitment to the Society. We must acknowledge and thank his wife Liz, for her contribution to the Society's administration as well. She has been a great help in setting up a good system of membership records and accounting procedures. John and Liz leave us tonight for an extended leave-of-absence. We wish them well and look forward to their return to the fold in about 18 months.

Mike White  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".