**65th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**PRESIDENT’S & WORK PARTY REPORTS**

**President’s Report:**

I am wondering if during my time as President that I will be able to present a report that stems from a normal year without any disruptions of a natural cause. Nevertheless it is again my pleasure and I believe privilege to present the President’s report of the Summit Road Society. Although our financial year ends on the 31st of December there have been some positives since that time that I would like to share with you.

The past year has been another of frustration especially regarding Ohinetahi. This reserve has suffered from the earthquakes and the Board was in a dilemma regarding what we should, or could do to enable this very popular place to again facilitate visitors. All the advice we received warned us of the possible consequences if someone received an injury whilst in the reserve. It was well known that people were still visiting even though we had signs indicating its closure. It was a relief to all that finally we had the opportunity to have a geotechnical report done to analyse the potential hazards, prioritise them and make recommendations on possible tracks that could be opened for public use. This survey was carried out by Aurecon, a firm that specialises in this sort of inspection and they completed a report that identified possible dangers, categorised them and identified areas that posed no problem for public access. The report indicated that Ohinetahi was not as bad as first thought although there was significant damage that posed a potential problem, but it was fairly well localised and overall the report indicated that a significant part of Ohinetahi could be opened to the public. There were further parts that could opened in stages after work is carried out or in some cases the diversion of some of the tracks to avoid potentially dangerous rock falls and suchlike.

After all this time the report was a real breath of fresh air. At long last we could go forward, although not as fast as we liked but at least we now could face the prospect of visitors enjoying the natural features of Ohinetahi. There are a number of tasks to do before we open such as signs indicating open or closed tracks, places where caution has to be observed but it means “Closed to the Public” will be a thing of the past. Signs have been made and to be put in place to guide those who want to take advantage of our reserve. I will leave it to Anne Kennedy to make an announcement regarding the reopening of Ohinetahi. While on this subject Anne and her team have continued to tend Ohinetahi with the same enthusiasm as always. They were faced with the dilemma of what to do first as the weeds were starting to get away. It was decided not to clear weeds from tracks that it was advisable to keep people out of because of rock fall and other hazards. Anne will bring you up to date on the past year at Ohinetahi.

Omahu Bush, our other pride and joy, has had a relatively normal year compared to Ohinetahi and has been carefully looked after by Paul Tebbutt and his team. Again I will let Paul bring you up to date over the past year. One thing that I would like to mention is the signs at the car park. The older ones were subject to vandalism and I did mention at our last AGM that we were going to make up some steel ones to try and combat the vandalism that takes place out there mainly due to the remoteness and the perpetrators likelihood of being caught is fairly remote. I am pleased to report that the signs were made up, installed by setting in concrete and left to rust so they look as natural as possible. Nick Singleton told me the other day the

signs look really good and there has been no sign of vandalism. Let’s hope they remain that way and we may look at the possibility of installing more of this type of sign.

The Eastenders are the other work party that has been a blessing to the re-establishment of the walking tracks in the Port Hills. The Park Rangers simply cannot speak more highly of them. It has been the contribution of the Eastenders to the maintenance and repairs to facilitate restoration of walkways that have accelerated the opening of many tracks. Paul Tebbutt is the leader of this dedicated team and he will present his own report. How both Anne and Paul find the time to commit themselves is something to admire and they surely are an inspiration to the people who work alongside them and to us on the Board, especially when they present their monthly reports informing us of the work and voluntary hours contributed by the teams of dedicated workers.

Again I must mention the Christchurch City Rangers and their leader Paul Devlin, who are so helpful and ready to assist in any way possible. Also the Board has continued to use the Ranger Headquarters for our meetings so we thank them for that even though one night a couple of members who continued with a meeting after the meeting were locked in the compound and it was a bit of an effort to release them. There is no mucking around after meetings now.

Arbor Day was again successful with the children willingly taking part in the planting of several hundred trees. The usual planting procedure was varied a little, this time with Di Carter, who organises the planting, taking a group of children to do some fill-in plantings on previously planted plots. Di decided that it was better to fill in the gaps where trees had not grown so the age of the plants was not too great. The planting this year was in very wet ground so it did not take long for some of the wet soil or should I say mud to be used for other purposes like face painting I have a couple of good photos of painted faces. It was such a pleasure to see not only the children taking part in the tree planting but be enjoying themselves so much. One has to admire the teachers who somehow still maintain control. I wonder if there is a record of the total number of trees that have been planted by the school children over the past years.

No report would be complete without mentioning the people who make the Society work as well as it does. Firstly there are the members, people who have a love for the Port Hills and want to preserve them as much as possible so that they may be enjoyed by all. Some see the Port Hills as a visual amenity from looking out over the countryside and some towards the hills from the lowlands. There are others who see the hills as a place that activities can take place such as walking the tracks or picnics or to just enjoy the sense of space as opposed to the city below. There are the workers who willingly give their time to make improvements and the Board who endeavour to see that the Society functions in an orderly way and keeps a watchful eye out to ensure that the nature of the Port Hills is not encroached on by inappropriate development.

To the Board members I wish to record my personal thanks to their dedication and frustration during the past year. It now looks like there is a start to return to normality and programmes can be put in place to involve members with outings and activities to promote the wonderful asset that is so close to Christchurch.

The Board membership has changed recently with the addition of new members Paula Smith from the Lyttelton/Mount Herbert Community Board, Melanie Coker from Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board and Grant Miller from Selwyn District Council. We welcome these enthusiastic and knowledgeable people.

Unfortunately we are losing three valuable members, Annette Foster, John Hayman and Tony Edney. Annette, Tony and John have contributed to the operation of the Board and we will miss their contributions which can

only be described as superb. Reluctantly we accept their resignations and wish them all the best for the future. Just a reminder John and Annette should you change your minds we would be only too happy to welcome you back and in Tony’s case we consider it a leave of absence.

I must also register a thank you to both the Christchurch City and Selwyn Councils for their financial support. Their financial assistance ensures that we have sufficient money to maintain the operation of the Society.

Finally I must mention the two people I rely on so much as President. They are Vice President, Jeremy and our untiring Secretary, John. May I say a personal thank you and a thank you from the Board for your commitment throughout the past year to the first independent environmental organisation in Christchurch, the Summit Road Society Inc.

**Bill Woods, March 2014**

**Ohinetahi Reserve:**

March 2013 was spent clearing out old man’s beard. The major area where infestations occur is at the lower edge of the Reserve nearest to housing. In April we were rained out one Tuesday but 2 days were spent again cutting out old man’s beard. The weedeaters were out at the end of April and the beginning of May as we coped with the autumn growth on the tracks. The last two work days of May were rained out. June saw the remainder of the tracks cleared and holes dug in preparation for tree planting. Weeds were cleared from previous plantings. In July we started clearing rocks from the south end of Ella’s track and Cass Ridge tracks so the weedeaters would have an easier run. Rocks and weedeaters are a bad combination.

Planting was the main activity in August and September. We planted about 170 trees in Gordon’s Garden which were bought from the DOC nursery at Motukarara. Flax bushes were removed from the edge of Bush Rd track and planted at the bottom of Cass Ridge track as well as some kanuka trees. Seedlings were also taken from other track edges and either planted in prepared plots to on-grow for planting this winter or planted in permanent positions in the Twitch Patch.

The wet weather in June caused 3 slips in Ohinetahi, two on Wai-iti track and one at the South end of O’Farrell’s track. Another slip originating in Living Springs took out a small section of fencing and a few sheep paid us a short visit. In October we finished clearing the rocks on Cass Ridge track and re-benching others that needed it and then it was back to weedeating with all tracks in a tidy state by the middle of December. After that came that wet and drizzly Christmas and New Year period. It was not great summer weather but the grass loved it. So out came the weedeaters again and now we are back to hunting down old man’s beard and dealing with any other weeds we find.

There are bait stations for possums located throughout the Reserve. Two runs are regularly checked every month during our work party time and Robin Collie checks the others at weekends. Our work party only numbers six these days and we would welcome a few more willing workers.

**Anne Kennedy, March 2014**

**Eastenders:**

The Eastenders, working twice a month on a Monday morning, continue to clock up the hours. We now number 32 members - one more than last year. During the year we have lost two members to retirement and

have been joined by several newcomers in the last few months. Some members are more active than others due to many reasons including earthquake work on homes and illness, however we have still managed an average of 12 members at any one work day and this has resulted in a total of 878 hours being worked over the last 12 months. As in previous years, we liaised closely with the Council Park Rangers, especially Nick Singleton and Hamish Masters.

The beginning of the year saw us working on the Old Dyers Pass Road track that runs alongside and south of the present road. Starting just below the car park at the Kiwi we steadily worked our way downhill, clearing the gorse and broom, widening the track and benching it ready for re-surfacing. Next we finally made it back to home turf – Barnett Park – and worked several long, hard days removing gorse and broom from the track that climbs up the eastern flank of the park up to the Eastenders Track, re-forming the track and clearing the drains. This had been closed for two years and was consequently very overgrown. Although now clear and walkable this track remains very uneven and is in need of serious repair due to under-runners continually appearing. The track from the Eastenders track up and around the base of the caves is still closed and is, unfortunately, likely to remain that way in the future due to rockfall danger.

For the next job we remained in the East, much to everyone’s delight, working on the new entrance to the Captain Thomas Walkway. The old entrance is forever closed due to the unstable rock face and the new one starts by the fields at the end of Sumnervale Drive. Cutting new zig zag tracks into the hard clay proved ‘character building’ as did digging the drains uphill of the track but we got there and the end result, suitably covered with clay and hard fill, is a testament to the power of many! In May we spent a morning digging holes in Victoria Park in readiness for the Arbor Day planting by local school children. Over the years the technique has been refined (sod removal, deep dig, soil aeration) and I am told the resultant survival of plantings has increased. Next we went back to Sumner, where we had day in Rapanui Bush at the top of Evans Pass. This lovely bit of bush was quite overgrown and we took to the overhanging growth and cleared the existing track. Then we moved on to Godley Head where we spent several days re-benching the crater rim walkway either side of Livingstone Col and building a rock-bridge over a particularly boggy stretch of track. We also installed some new markers on the track.

These were the major jobs tackled during the year but we also managed several smaller jobs including clearing tracks in and around Victoria Park, widening the track below the gondola top station and some smaller jobs in Barnett Park. We ended the year with a BBQ at Victoria Park where we caught up with some of the members not seen for a while. A huge thank you to Paul Devlin and his staff for the support given on this occasion.

Finally I would like to thank all of my fellow workers for the hard work put in over the year and also the Rangers who have kept the jobs and the morning teas coming. For the coming year we are all looking forward to working on the hills in the East – our true home!

**Paul Tebbutt, March 2014**

**Omahu Bush:**

Omahu Bush continues to thrive, both the bush block itself and the grazed area surrounding Gibraltar Rock. Good autumn and winter rain resulted in excellent growth, especially in the bush understory. Of course this meant that the grass tracks have also had good growth, resulting in one extra cut of Rhodes’ and Prendergast’s track being necessary in late spring. The June storms left a bit of a mess, with some large trees being uprooted and a couple of new clearings have appeared where this has occurred and these are already being colonized by seedlings. A large slip occurred on the lower part of Rhodes track which caused damage to the waterfall track directly below.

Our small, keen band of volunteers – we normally get 4 to 6 turning out - has managed to put in a total of 589 hours of work during the last twelve months on jobs as diverse as gorse control, car park signs and rock buildings. The day-to-day work involves maintaining gorse-free fencelines, track work involving clearing, widening and other small improvements where possible, pest control and education. In the grazed area a large amount of time was spent on gorse control. Some of the larger areas were even given names (e.g. Tom’s Block) as we went back time and again to make sure we got the stragglers. Several days were spent wandering over the whole block, eradicating smaller plants that had appeared since our last major foray two years ago. We also tidied up around the sheep yards and the grazier has helped by maintaining and using them regularly.

Also in the grazed block we inspected the old ‘Water Shed’ which stands at the north east base of Gibraltar Rock. This small, stone shed was built to collect and distribute water from the springs down the hill to the houses below. Now it is in a state of disrepair, with the stonework needing some serious work. It was suggested to me that the Historic Places Trust may have an interest but this was not the case. We now have to decide whether we spend any time and money on repair and restoration. If anybody has the interest and necessary skills I would be delighted to speak to them.

In the bush block track maintenance was the order of the year, including improvements to the upper part of Kirks track, repairing damage after the storm on Kirks and Prendergast’s tracks and clearing gorse from the upper part of Prendergast’s track where we had not been able to get to since the earthquakes. After two years of pretty intensive work on the tracks it is pleasing to say that not a lot of major work has been necessary, only a small amount of time spent cutting back growth on the sides so as to allow unimpeded travel – and even this job is a source of robust discussion amongst the group!

The ‘track-with-no-name’ has now become Nelson’s Track, after Grant and Marilyn Nelson. This is the steep track down to the stream from the junction with Kirk’s Track. New signage will be installed this coming year. We are also planning to upgrade the signs at the old, lower car park. In May we finally installed the new signs in the main car park. These are made out of ungalvanised steel and have been concreted into the ground. They have weathered nicely to a rusty brown and, touch wood (steel?), have not been vandalised to date.

In September and October we had the welcome support of ‘outsiders’ helping us with some big tasks. A group of 7 from Downers joined us for a day to clear gorse from the SE flank of Gibraltar Rock and then later that month 7 university students (who showed us just how fit they were) got stuck into clearing the clay and mud slip on the waterfall track. By the end of that day they still had the energy to march up Rhodes Track at a rapid rate whilst we older ones took our time staggering up behind them! Finally in October five 11 year olds and their mothers came along to help clear a patch of gorse by the sheep-yards. Much yelling by the girls when the

large spiders appeared! We enjoyed the valuable help of all three of these groups and it is heartening to know that there are plenty of people willing to give up their time for a good cause.

With regard to Gibraltar Rock, we have worked with the Alpine Club to determine a poled route around to the climbing area and signage is being installed at the gate to instruct climbers on the rules. Pest control activities have continued with the capture of 3 more deer, 4 pigs and 18 possums by our resident hunter Ben. Also traps have taken care of 15 hedgehogs, 2 rats and 6 stoats. The grazier has done a good job again and the silver tussock is healthy and thriving.

Once again, my thanks to all who have helped this year, especially the loyal band of workers who turn out whatever weather (almost) and the Council Rangers who continue to help in many ways.

**Paul Tebbutt, March 2014**