**President’s Report 2014.**

I must be succumbing to the very situation that I have disagreed with over the years and that is as you grow older the years fly by faster. It is almost unbelievable that another year has taken place and it is time for me to sit down and reflect on what has taken place during the past year. As always when compiling a report the very substance of it, no matter how much or for that matter how little information it contains, gives pleasure to the writer to be able to present it to members. Hopefully it gives those members the satisfaction that their own personal membership of such a worthy organisation is so meaningful and worthwhile to be able to share a valued interest in undoubtedly Christchurch’s greatest natural asset The Port Hills.

Last year I commented, wondering if I will be able as President to present a report that would be free from disruptions from natural causes. Surprise, surprise, this past year has been relatively natural disaster free and we have been in a positive mode. There are a still a few results of the natural causes that have not been rectified such as potentially dangerous rocks on tracks that remain closed on Ohinetahi but when considering all situations the past year has returned to as much normality as can be expected. Although one event was the storm that devastated tracks that were opened with the excessive amount of rainfall. The Bridle Path track being the worst affected where water damage was really bad making the track un-usable. This was disappointing after all the hard work that had been carried out to complete its restoration. Although the Bridle Path track is not on our land the Eastenders were involved in the repair work.

One natural cause that will never be eliminated is the passing on of our members and this year has been no exception. There have been four supporters of the Society and their love of the Port Hills is without question. It is with sadness that I mention Bob Cawley whose contribution to the Society as Committee member and his involvement to the East Enders are without question. I personally enjoyed his dry sense of humour and remember the laughs I have shared with him especially when he was recalling a particular incident. Also there was Reg. Parnell and Mrs M Paterson, and a very passionate supporter of the Port Hills, Colin Faulkner, although his brother Ben was on the Committee in earlier days when I first became involved. The work and commitment of the Faulkner Brothers is legendary. With them being very reluctant to talk of their achievements there was a possibility that what they have done over the past years will remain largely unknown. It is important that their reluctance of publicity be respected but the possibility of their work inspiring others cannot be ignored. There is a process underway to record at least a portion of the Faulkner Brothers combined contribution to the preservation of the Port Hills so that it will not be lost.

Slow but positive progress is being made on the opening of the Summit Road and the portion from Evans Pass to the Bridle Path was completed only to pedestrians and bikers. Some believe this is not a bad thing as it creates a more park-like atmosphere where those on the road do not have to worry about motor vehicles so the pace is a lot slower. How long this situation will last is not known at this time but should stay that way until decisions and work takes place on the portion between the Bridle Path and the Kiwi. Whilst on that portion of the Road the Sign of The Kiwi remains as it has been since the earthquakes but there are rumours about its and the Takahe’s restoration, so we wait with baited breath.

A grand day was had when we opened the tracks that were considered safe at Ohinetahi. A good number of people turned up to be part of the official opening of the tracks by Honourable Ruth Dyson, Member of Parliament for the Port Hills. Ruth has been a stalwart of the Society for a long time now and has officiated for

us at a few functions for us now. After cutting the ribbon we toasted the opening with a glass of bubbly. The atmosphere was positive even though the weather looked like it was going to turn nasty and rain but fortunately it held off and there was no interruption. Anne Kennedy’s report will cover more of the last year regarding Ohinetahi.

Omahu our other gem that was relatively unscathed from the earthquakes continue to give pleasure to all those who visit and enjoy the bush walks or climbing Gibraltar Rock that has become an alternative to Castle Rock which is still out of bounds for safety reasons. Omahu is under the care of Paul Tebbutt and he will report more fully on the activities that took place over the last year. Arbor Day was another success. To involve the younger generation in the importance of tree planting and the contribution they make in so many ways to the environment both visually and functionally is a policy that the Society must continue with. Thanks must go to Di Carter for her leadership and organisation of these days that are so rewarding. The Eastenders captained by Paul Tebbutt (What an inspiration this man is) prepared the ground for the children every year by digging the holes required for the planting. If this was not done the success of the plantings, both the strike rate and the enthusiasm of the children would be severely diminished. I would like to take this opportunity to mention a special thank you to those Eastenders who willingly give up their time year after year to make Arbor Day such a tremendous success.

To date there has been no update on Harry our sponsored Tui it is hoped that he is enjoying life somewhere on the peninsula or better still the Port Hills. By now if all things are equal he should have had the opportunity to find a mate and settle down if that is what tuis do. Tonight we are privileged to have as our guest speaker Laura Molles. Laura is someone who has been involved in the Tui Restoration Project so may have some news for us regarding Harry. Plus Laura is involved with project involving students from Lincoln University carrying out fieldwork at Ohinetahi.

A very important part of our Society is the volunteers who willingly give their time to the Society but those who join the work parties show their personal commitment to the enhancement of the land that we love. The total volunteer hours in 2014 were 2,660. There must be a multitude of reasons why these particular people become involved and give up their time that could be spent elsewhere to make a contribution to the work of making the Port Hills a most enjoyable place to visit. They cannot be thanked enough in my book and it is such a pleasure to hear from members of the public words of praise about the wonderful plant life, the birds that are increasing in numbers and of course the tracks that make walking or mountain biking amongst this wonderful landscape possible. I want to assure all volunteers that the dedication that you put into the port hills for whatever reason it is always appreciated and goes a long way to inspire others to make the same sort of commitment. Apart from the volunteers are the members who again express their love for the Port Hills by joining and maintaining their membership. Let me assure you that membership is a vital part of the Society’s lifeline.

Some members are prevented from the physical volunteering work but do keep up their membership as their part in involving themselves. Subscriptions are a big part of the continuation of the Society but there are other benefits of membership that are very important such as maintaining numbers so our voice is heard the more

members both direct and indirect insure that our voice is loud enough not to be ignored. Over the past 66 years the Summit Road Society has created a reputation second to none for its commitment to the

preservation of the Port Hills. The challenge facing us today is to maintain that reputation and not let all the hard work and more importantly success of those who have gone before us go to waste.

While on the subject of members our present membership is slightly down on last year from 343 to 326 however we have maintained our group members of 14 and technically all their members plus we have 6 reciprocal members. So all in all we are still in a healthy position membership wise. Still it is a challenge to us all to increase our membership. Maybe now that things are returning to normal albeit slowly interest in the Summit Road Society will increase and with it increased membership. With the returning to normal if I may call it that there has been a reconvening of the Promotions and Activities Committee which will give a revitalised awareness of the Society. The outings and day trips that were held during past times certainly increased the profile of the Society’s work and large attendances were the norm. With more and more of the Port Hills being accessible to the public it is hoped that the interest in what the Port Hills had to offer will return.

No President’s report is complete without a special thank you to our very well respected Park Rangers. I do not know what we would do without them and I can safely say the feeling is mutual. It has been suggested by Paul and his team that if possible a new work party be started up to concentrate on the maintenance of the tracks in the centre region of the Port Hills. It was not that long ago that we had a small work party that used to carry out maintenance work around Victoria Park called the Weekenders so the establishment of the Centre Section Party would be somewhat similar to the Weekenders. It is believed that there should be a fairly large catchment in the surrounding residential area of people both men and women looking for a part time activity that would provide them with open air opportunities and of course the camaraderie offered to these types of groups is without question.

In the latter part of the year a proposal was put forward to create an Adventure Park on the McVicars land below the Kiwi that had been investigated for purchase as an addition to the Port Hills open space. The Board looked at this proposal and considered it to fit within the objectives of the Society so made submissions and highlighted areas of concern. As it will be well known the consent was granted and it is now up to the developers to honour the commitment they made of the environmental protection.

It would be remiss of me to not thank the Christchurch City and Selwyn District Councils for their financial support and their respective representatives from Council and Community Boards. We had a new member join the Board during the year Hamish Grant. Hamish is a keen cyclist so brings a new and refreshing aspect and approach to the Board plus a new perspective to the subject of enjoyment of the Port Hills. I must take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members for their input to the governance of the Society. It never fails to amaze me how these people are so willing when it comes to committing themselves to regular monthly meetings that entail the necessary and sometime hum-drum procedures of keeping the Society functioning. May I again thank my Vice- President, Jeremy Agar who so willingly steps in to take over should I be unavailable. Also I must record a big thank you to our Secretary who unfailingly seems to willingly complete the tasks of keeping things in order.

Thank You.

Bill Woods

President 24/3/15

Eastenders

Annual Report – 2014

Another year has passed and the Eastenders continue to turn up and work hard at our twice-monthly outings. The present gang consists of 30+ members and the average turnout remains around 12 on any one day and the best day was one working at Victoria Park, when 18 turned up. Our total hours worked for the year is down a little from last year at 750, (878 for 2013) due in part to inclement weather in June resulting in cancelled days.

We started the year at Livingstone Col, benching and generally improving the track. Then we worked in Jollies Bush clearing tracks. In February we spent some time on the Capt. Thomas Walkway, clearing a small slip and digging drains – not the easiest of jobs in a dry summer! Next we moved back to Jollies Bush after the storm in March, clearing debris and trimming fallen branches. April saw us at the Tors above Rapaki doing track improvement work and we followed this by returning to Capt. Thomas, where we extended the drains we had put in, in February. This time it was a little easier….. In May we worked at Victoria Park, upgrading the track at the entrance and then at the end of the month we returned and readied the ground for Arbor Day. Our one working day in June was spent on the Crater Rim Walkway above Rapaki building a new stretch of track, which was necessary due to ownership changes, coupled with rockfall hazards. By July we were back (again) at Capt. Thomas, benching the short track up from the valley floor to Evans Pass Rd after which we moved to the Harry Ell walkway and did some serious drainage work which was sorely needed after the heavy June rains.

Back to Cpt. Thomas (we just love this track…) planting tussocks and drainage maintenance followed by some track re-alignment, due to slips and flooding, further up the hill.

August and September the Rangers ferried us in to the area below the Tors. This area was still closed at the time and needed a new section of the Crater Rim Walkway to be constructed. These two days were wonderful, the weather was good and it felt as though we were helping the hills come back to life – this section has, of course, now re-opened and it is good to see the new track being well used. Next we worked on the small track within Rapanui Bush, at the top of Evans Pass, where we were benching the track, clearing the excess foliage and installing box drains. Interestingly at least two of our team were instrumental in planting this piece of bush back in the 1950’s as a school project! November we were at Scott Reserve, benching the track and lopping back overgrowth and then Holdsworth Track above Kennedy’s Bush, benching and widening the track in order that the Rangers could get their mower through. Finally in December we returned to Jollies Bush, benching and improving the track. Several different types of native orchids were seen here and we hope to get someone from the Orchid Society out to identify them next November or December.

We ended the year, as is customary, with a BBQ at Victoria Park. Members not seen for a while were also invited and we had a good catch-up as well as some great food. As always, a huge thanks to Paul and his team of Rangers, with whom we work closely during the year, for the support given to the Eastenders and for putting on the BBQ. Special thanks to Nick and Hamish and of course the loyal, keen and hard-working members of the gang.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2015

 Omahu Bush

Annual Report 2014

The year at Omahu has been one of contrasts. A good autumn was followed by a very wet winter and then spring arrived during which the bush seemed to explode with growth. The summer, however, soon put a stop to that and now some plants are visibly drooping, especially in the stonier areas. It is to be hoped we get some decent rainfall soon. The silver tussock area is looking a picture, although also very dry. Keeping on top of the gorse in this area has resulted in the view from the Summit Road being much improved and it would be a cold heart indeed that didn’t admire the panorama from the cattle grid south-west over the plains on a cool crisp winter morning. Makes it all worth it.

Our loyal band of workers who turn out averages 5 people and we managed a total of 537 hours, slightly down on last year due to having to cancel 6 outings due to inclement weather.

As in previous years the work this year has been largely taken up with the control and eradication of gorse and broom. Once we managed to get the grazed area looking better (and we still need to walk over the block every now and again to catch the ones we missed) we concentrated on Rhodes and Prendergasts Tracks. We pondered employing a contractor to spray the banks on the sides of the track but once we discovered the natives gamely trying to push their way through we decided that manual control – cutting the gorse at ground level and painting the stumps with herbicide – was a better, if more time consuming, method. The excellent spring growth, of course, included the gorse and we are still fighting some of the thicker areas towards the bottom of Rhodes Track. Prendergasts problem was slightly different, with lots of gorse growing within the tracks. Control involved a knapsack sprayer and several plastic drums of water being carted up to the top to replenish the sprayer and although not quite finished we are hopeful we have got most of the plants within the track.

Other regular, on-going work carried out during the year included benching and improvement of the tracks, vegetation control on the tracks (especially where the regenerating *coprosmas* took over in spring) and drainage improvements. We also erected signs on Prendergasts Track warning of rockfall danger from Gibraltar Rock and, together with the Alpine Club, have installed a sign on the gate through to Gibraltar Rock identifying the Do’s and Don’t’s for climbers.

When conditions were ideal – little wind and no low cloud – we worked on Gibraltar Rock, clearing gorse and broom and improving access to the rock. The view from the top of the rock on calm days is also pretty good!

Other help during the year was forthcoming from a team from Chorus who joined us in May to tackle gorse on Rhodes Track. This effectively doubled our team and it was most pleasing at the end of the day to look back at the 30 or 40 metres we had managed to clear. The abundance of spring growth resulted in the tracks needing an extra mowing and due to the extra workload on the council we turned to a contractor who has done a great job, even if inadvertently giving us another project rebuilding the entry and exit to the stream that flows over Rhodes Track when his mower grounded!

One of the highlights of the year for me personally was the day out I had with two members of the NZ Native Orchid Group. The enthusiasm shown by these two was infectious and soon I was excitedly identifying plants as we wandered down Kirks Track (I had no previous knowledge of native orchids). The probable discovery of

a species (*Pterostylis banksii* or ‘Tutukiwi’) not noted before in this area was an added bonus. Although these plants are, in the main, small and delicate they are exquisite and I am now a confirmed supporter of the cause.

On the pest control side, our hunter has only taken one fallow deer this year – more have been seen but are very shy and are proving difficult to catch. Wild pig damage was noted on Prendergasts Track earlier in the year but things have been quiet in recent months. Although confident we had the possum problem under control the purchase and installation of 5 new automated traps has caused a re-think with 7 possums caught in two weeks. We believe that a variety of traps is our best arsenal and will continue to monitor the situation. Stoat catches have been low, 3 animals only for the year. Rat numbers were high enough for Landcare Research to install over 200 modified Victor traps in a trial, which finishes later this year. So far around 100 rats, 40 mice and 1 stoat have been caught. If the trial is successful then the traps may become commercially available and hopefully will cost under $20 meaning another string available for our bow. Careful grazing management continues to help in the maintenance of the silver tussock whilst the rental paid by the grazier is most useful in purchasing tools and other necessities.

I conclude by giving a huge thanks to all the people who have helped with the work on this wonderful piece of land on the Port Hills, especially the Friday team who put up with my various idiosyncrasies and all the people from the CCC Rangers who have helped in so many ways.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2015

Ohinetahi Reserve

**Work Party Report 2014**

## Reserve Re-opening:

# At the end of March last year we re-opened the Reserve to the public after the closure because of the earthquakes. Because of their nearness to bluffs not all of the tracks are open, namely those in the Faulkners Valley area and the Totara Log/Bivvy tracks. Signs have been erected at the entrances to the Reserve warning of the danger of rockfall. We thank the Port Hills rangers for allowing us to use their facilities to construct these signs and the Over Forties tramping club for a hard day’s work in putting the signs in position.

## Plantings:

 10 Kanuka trees were planted near the bottom of Cass Ridge track around the edge of a patch of broom in the hope that as they mature they will help to keep the broom in check. Some trees and shrubs were also planted along a section of the eastern boundary so that continual maintenance will not be required to keep weeds in check. For the last two seasons we have been taking seedlings from the track edges and have grown them on in small plots we have established. They are then planted out in grass areas to assist in revegetation.

Tracks

Our usual practice is to weed-eat the tracks in late autumn and early summer. But this year the sea fogs rolled up the harbour in December keeping the Reserve damp. So while the other side of the hills was getting very

dry our grass kept on growing and we had to weed-eat the tracks a second time. Bother those fogs! But it had the advantage that our plantings stayed moist and the blackberries this year have been big, sweet and juicy.

### Weeds:

Our usual attack on weedy plants has continued. Passion vine, old mans beard, spindleberry, cherry, berberis, sycamore and other garden escapees pop up regularly. Spur valerian has become widespread in Faulkners valley and is spreading to other rocky bluffs. While the work party can deal with some of this there is a need to employ someone experienced in ropework to deal with what is on the steep faces. This means we must go for funding and so far we have received a $7,500 grant from Canterbury Community Trust. This is not enough and our hard working secretary is applying for more money so this work can be carried out. Applications for funding require an enormous amount of paperwork. We are working with the Port Hills Rangers in this project and are grateful to have Di Carter‘s advice.

### Animal Pests:

Robin Collie along with Joan Swift and Mike White continue to look after bait stations and traps as we endeavour to keep possums, rats and mustelids under control.

### The Rock:

We are awaiting quotes for the removal of the dangerous rock on the Lookout in Faulkners Valley. It will be necessary to obtain funding to carry out this work.

### Visitors:

People and tramping clubs are returning to the Reserve. The Christmas Rogaine used our land with about 200 people participating.

**Work party:**

We have 7 regular members in our work party at the moment, 3 women and 4 men with ages ranging from 35 to the late 70s. The earthquake caused the numbers to drop off dramatically but we are slowly rebuilding our membership. It is not necessary to commit to coming every week and we are very relaxed about people turning up when they are able to. We welcome anyone who wishes to come out with us.

### Retirement:

 After over 15 years of service to the Summit Road Society Ken Hall decided to call it a day. We miss his cheerful and willing contribution to the upkeep of the reserve.

Anne Kennedy

March 2015