**Summit Road Society**

**President’s report 2016**

Once again it is my pleasure to present as President the 67th annual report for the 2015 year.

I drive to Christchurch on average about three times a week and as I approach the city the majesty of the Port Hills including those on the Bank’s Peninsula never fail to impress me. It often passes through my mind what if the Summit Road Society never existed would there be as much open space as there is now or would there be more housing and other structures that would take away the open space appearance that is enjoyed by all. I would like to think that the answer would be, the open space concept of the Port Hills would be severely compromised if it were not for the dedication and passion for the Port Hills of the Summit Road Society.

It must be remembered that the Summit Road Society came into existence long before the preserving of the environment became fashionable. Today it is a different matter there are a considerable number of organisations that have been set up to protect the environment with most of them, if not all complimentary to the objectives of the Society. They range from those wanting to re-establish the flora and fauna to those who want to enjoy the experience of being close to nature in an active way by walking or riding through the many accessible tracks and open spaces that are provided for the public to enjoy. The Summit Road society can hold its head high in regard to being a major part in pioneering and continuing to being heavily involved in obtaining that outcome. It still never fails to amaze me the reputation and the high esteem that the Society has among the professional people in Christchurch. This reputation was not as they say “won in a raffle” it was earned by the dedication, passion and willingness to lead by example in providing work forces to build and maintain tracks so the true wonderment of the Port Hills can be enjoyed.

We must never forget the willingness and success of the original members as they set a standard that is a challenge to us to equal or better still improve on. There are just as many challenges today as there have been in the past although the human ones have shown a tendency to decline but let me assure you that they will still appear in the future. The relentless challenges of nature will always be present, be it pests both animal and plant life. They will always be a threat that has to be confronted with so we must be committed to deal with them in effective ways to preserve the naturalness of the Port Hills.

2015 was a year free from natural disasters and a sense of normality has taken over. Sure there has been the odd earthquake but none of these has affected our operation to any noticeable degree. Finally the troublesome rock at Ohinetahi has been removed and all the tracks are able to be opened. I will let Anne report on that plus the action plan on spur valerian eradication. Both leaders of work parties Anne and Paul will report their activities throughout the year. While on that subject the highest praise to these dedicated members must not go unannounced they are an inspiration to us all they have been in the past and will continue to do so until they decide to no longer continue their respective roles. It worries me that they will be so hard to replace and I continue to think that they may be training someone else up to take their place when the time finally arises.

While on the subject Paul Tebbut was honoured by Volunteering Canterbury for his work at Omahu and the Eastenders. A few of us from the Board were there to clap extra loudly as he received his award from previous Mayor Garry Moore. Recognition truly deserved.

There have been no reported sightings of Harry our sponsored Tui we can only hope that all is well with him. Harry is probably like most members of the Society he is just prepared to make his mark without seeking the limelight.

Arbor Day was another success with three primary schools taking part. For the first time the scheduled day had to be postponed due to the weather and it looked unlikely that the alternate day would be suitable as well due to the weather but the three schools Cashmere, Halswell and Te Waka Unua were keen to carry on with the planting so over 400 trees were planted watched over by our good friend Ranger, Di Carter and her team of rangers, plus a small team of students and parents from St Martins School. The Eastenders once again prepared the site by digging the holes. A big thank you must go to all those involved. It will be a wonderful sight in few years where the whole of Latters Spur will be covered in native trees thanks to the children of Christchurch.

Again no report would be complete without a mention of the Park Rangers who give up their personal time to attend our meetings and report on the activities relating to the work carried out on the hills by all dedicated people. A special thank you to both Paul Devlin and Nick Singleton who are the most involved with the Board’s activities. Our membership is slightly down on individual members but if we take into account group membership our numbers are at our usual high. We have lost one outstanding member during the year, Colin Faulkner who worked in the hills for years along with his brother Ben mapping Ohinetahi and contributing to the general upkeep of the reserve. I do remember at a function where Paul Devlin gave a talk about his application for the Head Ranger’s position and during site visits he met the Faulkner Brothers they told him what they were doing and why. It was his meeting them that was a huge influence on his decision to take up the position as he was convinced that if this was an example of the dedication of the local people towards the protection of the natural environment this was the place for him.

I did mention in a previous report over five years ago that there were investigations into the purchase of additional land to increase the land for public use on the Port Hills. The earthquakes put that on hold but it can now be revealed that negotiations are again underway due to grants being made to the Society that put it in a position to make a purchase. The details will be made public soon if the necessary procedures such as consents surveys, etc are completed. So **“Watch this Space”.** It will be an exciting event for the Society and the people of Christchurch to have another parcel of land protected from future development.

I wish to record my thanks and appreciation to our Board for their commitment to attending and contributing to our meetings and the running of the Board’s affairs. Special thanks go to the Local Body appointed Members who make themselves available with the same enthusiasm as elected members. Special mention must go to my Deputy Jeremy Agar and our Secretary John Goodrich a president and the Society as a unit is well served by these willing office holders.

I must mention our founder John Jameson who now is not able to attend our meetings is I am sure keeping a close watch on our performance. Finally I must thank all the members of the Society for their continuing support whether it is a member of the working parties or just telling the virtues of the Society to their friends

and keeping us in the public interest. Your support and membership is our greatest attribute in staying a viable and effective force in protecting the Port Hills for future generations as the city at its feet grows and space become more restricted.

Thank you. Bill Woods, President 21/3/2016.

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Eastenders

Annual Report – 2015

The twelve months to January 2016 has seen the Eastenders working closer to ‘home’ than in the previous 4 years due to more tracks being re-opened and needing work. This has been good news as the numbers of attendees are always better on local days. Overall numbers are reasonably static with a total of 35 members, which seems to result in an average of 15 stretching their legs on any one day. We lost a total of 6 days due to bad weather but still managed a creditable total of 784 hours for the year, a slight increase on 2014. Some members have been laid up during the year due to various ailments and problems and we wish them all the best and look forward to seeing them again when they are fit and able to join us.

The biggest job for the year was the benching and general improvements on the tracks (Capt Thomas and Scarborough Bluffs) leading from Sumner up to Evans Pass and back down, continuing over Scarborough Bluffs towards Taylors Mistake to the sheep yards at the top. Work included rock removal, track widening, drainage and planting and was most enjoyable for the main part – the southerly wind meant we had to work hard to keep warm at times. It is pleasing to see just how much of an improvement it has made to the tracks. We even had some input from the Mountain Bikers whilst on the Capt Thomas Track!

Other work done over the year included 20 of us out for a morning in March on the Crater Rim at Hoon Hay Reserve, widening the track so that the Park Rangers could get their mower through. We also worked at benching the Crater Rim track near Sugarloaf, clearing excess vegetation in Victoria Park, gorse and broom control at the top of the Bridal Path and general track improvements at Jollies Bush.

Our annual hole-digging for Arbor Day in Victoria Park in May was the quickest ever – 8 brave, hardy (foolhardy?) souls managed to dig 480 holes in just 2 1/2 hours on a cold, wet southerly day. That’s one every two and a half minutes, and no time for morning tea! We ended the year, as usual, with a day working on the entrance track into Victoria Park after which we had a BBQ at the Rangers HQ.

To finish, I would like to thank those involved in the group for their camaraderie and hard work over the year. Also, as always, thanks to Hamish, Nick, Paul and Di for their help and support and a great BBQ.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2015

Omahu Bush

Annual Report - 2015

Another busy year at Omahu Bush - the weather was reasonable, the bush continued to look healthy and so did the gorse! Our small(ish) band of volunteers has expanded since last year and we now average 7 workers and in total we worked a huge 905 hours, up from 537 last year. This was helped by kind weather as we only had two cancellations – one due to rain and one due to snow!

The main task undertaken was, as in previous years, preventing the tracks being overrun with gorse. We try to concentrate on one area at a time, however in order to prevent dissention in the ranks we occasionally take a break and work in the bush to restore our souls. We have now worked our way over the whole of Prendergasts Track and a good way down Rhodes Track – the lower part we hope to finish soon. We took to a portion of the track with a chainsaw and brushcutter, which opened up the old man plants making it easier to get to the base for cutting. We were also helped considerably in June by 15 willing helpers from the IT company Sungard. As well as doing some sterling work they also showed us exactly how morning teas should be held – food in abundance, blankets and a choice of drinks.

As well as gorse we had a concerted effort seeking out other plant weeds including Darwins Barberry (*Berberis darwinii)* and Elderberry (*Sambucas nigra)*. Ranger Di Carter supplied a map and some help in searching out the former and some large plants were discovered and eradicated. With the Elderberry we saw more than we had in previous years and will need to keep a watchful eye out in the future. We always seemed to find them in the middle of a patch of gorse which resulted in scratched limbs and a few choice words. Areas of blackberry have been noted on bush margins and sprayed by knapsack sprayer.

On the track improvement side we have installed a large concrete drainpipe under the track that winds through the grazing area. The pipe was noticed by one of the team in a section in Huntsbury where a house was being demolished and the foreman was only too pleased to donate it to the cause – it saved him taking it to the dump. An earlier quote for a plastic pipe was over $200. The bush tracks are generally in decent order and have not needed any major work, just the usual cutting back of overhanging branches and a clean up after southerly storms. The small cut-through track that cuts into the bush halfway down Rhodes Track has had quite a few hours spent on it as it had become narrow and gorse-infested. It is now clear and much wider and a pleasant way to get back into the bush on a hot day. Nelsons Track - the track that snakes down to the stream from the junction with Kirks - will need some maintenance work this winter.

Pest control is continuing and although pig damage has been seen our hunter has taken no pigs or deer. A member of the public discovered a dead deer in the middle of Prendergasts Track that needed disposal. The modified rat traps that Landcare had installed were donated to the Society on completion of the trial and these have been shared between Omahu and Ohinetahi. Rats, stoats and mice continue to be caught in low numbers. The grazed area continues to be carefully utilised by our grazier and the area has been walked over for stray gorse plants twice during the year. As has been noted in the newsletter, we had 50 native plants donated to us by Trees for Canterbury and we planted these on the grass bank near the main car park. Our most recent inspection shows we have lost only 3 of these which is encouraging and we plan on more, small plantings in the future.

Away from Omahu, the gang was approached about helping mark out the 360 Trail and along with Anne and the Ohinetahi gang we covered the trails from Godley Head to Kennedys Bush, erecting posts and fixing signs.

Finally, as always I would like to thank all those who have helped and supported us during the year, especially the Team who turn out in all conditions and who make working in the reserve such a delight.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2016

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**OHINETAHI REPORT 2016**

This year has seen two large projects undertaken in Ohinetahi. Firstly, the dangerous rock on the lookout above Faulkners and South Boundary tracks was made safe. The track closed signs will be replaced in the near future by signs alerting people to the possibility of falling rocks.

Our second big project was to start on the control and hopefully, eventually the eradication of Spur Valerian from the bluffs which make Ohinetahi such a spectacular place. Our work party lacks the ability to reach most of these infestations and we are reliant on people with the necessary abseiling skills to carry out this work. This has been paid for with grants from the Rata Foundation, WWF New Zealand and Environment Canterbury. Anyone who has applied for grants will know the long trail of paperwork involved and we thank the secretary for his work in this regard. The news is not good though. Spur Valerian has had a boomer year and there was much more of this weed than expected. Park Ranger, Di Carter is advising us and we are grateful for her input.

Lincoln University used Ohinetahi to train students how to do surveys .We have had no feedback so we assume they found no glaring problems. On the first Sunday in September we held a tree planting day to which we invited members of the society hoping they would enjoy a day out on the reserve. Sadly only three members responded but 150 trees were planted and we are able to report they are doing well. We also planted 100 kanuka trees at the bottom of Cass Ridge track. We have two small nursery gardens where we plant trees gathered from the sides of the tracks. This small project gives us about another 100 trees to plant out each year.

With El Nino forecast and low rainfall in October and November we were expecting a long summer of plant watering. However we got lucky with December and January producing good falls of rain. While we were lucky with the plants we were not so lucky with the tracks. They were mowed and in good shape by mid-December and then because of the rain they had to be done all over again. The grass on the tracks is longer than normal but not impossible and we hope to catch up again in autumn. For the moment we are fully occupied chasing down Old Man’s Beard which must be done now while it is in flower.

We continue to maintain possum bait stations and traps for possums and stoats. We were given some rat traps by Landcare Research that were used for a project in Omahu Bush. We have set some out but have so far failed to catch anything. It could be we have low numbers or we need more tempting bait. In July, four of us attended a Rotary evening where we explained about our reserves. They have promised to help with

trapping but pressure of work has prevented any help so far. We are still in contact and hope to get something up and running before long.

As usual, we spend a good deal of time eradicating pest plants. Our most common enemies are Old Mans Beard, passion vine, spindle berry and berberis. We have discovered at least 18 hawthorn trees, some quite large, in an area off Cass Ridge which we have yet to deal with.

The ‘we” referred to throughout this report are Robin, Joan, Andrew, Stuart, Mike, Elliott, Tony, Anne and Jane (has just recently been lured back to paid employment) who have worked in the reserve over the past year. Come and join us.

Anne Kennedy, 16th March 2016