**Summit Road Society: 68th President’s report 2017**

2016 started off as the first normal year for the Summit Road Society as there was a sense of optimism that with the unstable bolder that was keeping Faulkner’s track closed finally stabilised, all our tracks were open to the public. The last of the restrictions imposed on us as a result of the earthquakes was now gone and we could now concentrate on the activities that could promote the Society and what we had to offer to attract members, volunteers for our work parties and of course visitors to our reserves to experience the wonderful feeling of being amongst the finest native vegetation on the Port Hills. The vegetation is one thing but the bird life and the tranquillity of it all is something that has to be treasured.

Work continued on weed and animal control as well as track maintenance. Benefits were becoming more obvious at an ever increasing rate the biodiversity increase was becoming a reality. Comments from returning visitors were complimentary, which in itself was a boost for our untiring devoted workers on all fronts as not all of our volunteering work is confined to our own land. The City Council land is the main focus for the Eastenders.

Another project that was making good progress was the purchase of Tussock Hill Farm between Mount Vernon Park and Castle Rock Reserve was nearing completion and the very positive response from the press was most encouraging. This gave the Society tremendous publicity and there were offers of help by volunteers that wanted to contribute to the making of tracks both walking and mountain biking but the message given out was thank you very much and when the deal is completed and we have made plans on what is needed and prioritised we will get back to you.

Five years of restrictions were now behind us and weathering the storm of enquiries and even some criticism that we were not doing enough, it was onward and upward as the saying goes. Plans were being talked about for membership drives and more publicity to complement this. The Society is aware of the fact that owning land is one very positive way of ensuring that the Port Hills will be kept free of inappropriate subdivision but there is a responsibility of keeping that land in a condition that encourages others to support the work of the Society.

Regular Board meetings do not make any physical contribution to maintaining the area of land that we own. Although the board meetings are important for the business side of the Society it is the members and in some cases non-members who enjoy the camaraderie and the enjoyment of being outdoors engaging in self-satisfying work that keeps the Port Hills such a magical place for thousands of visitors whether they be local or distant. The very fact that the Port Hills are so close to the city means there is not only the opportunity to experience the outdoors but such a variety that accommodates all tastes.

This leads me to thanking all those who are part of the work parties whether it be the Eastenders, Ohinetahi or Omahu. The work you do is recognised in at least two ways. Firstly the tracks that people use are kept safe and except in difficult terrain are easy for the

average person to negotiate giving them the opportunity to look around and take in the beauty of the surroundings. Secondly the efforts of weed and animal pest eradication, plus the planting of new vegetation adds to the diversification of the vista. Regular or repeat visitors are always complimentary on the improvement of the vegetation and birdlife. Comments of this nature always prompt one to do better all I can say is keep up the good work your efforts are certainly not wasted. I will leave it to our work-party leaders to present more detailed reports on their own patch.

Once again Latter’s Spur was occupied by school children planting almost 500 trees as part of our Arbor Day tradition. I am not aware of how many trees we have planted over the years but it must amount in the thousands. Again thanks to the East Enders for digging the holes and preparing the site and to Di Carter and her team who do not leave until all the plants are safely in the ground.

By mentioning Di Carter it appropriate to mention the other rangers who we rely on so much for their contribution to the work of the Society. Paul Devlin and Nick Singleton have continued with their guidance and informative contributions to keep us up to date as to what is happening in their area of responsibility. I must not forget Hamish Masters who is mostly involved with the Eastenders work.

One completely new initiative that took place later on in the year in November, was the launch of our Port Hills Predator Free Campaign. This is the brainchild of our Vice President Jeremy Agar. Jeremy was a foundation member of the successful predator free campaign to save the Brown Kiwi at Arthurs Pass. The first meeting to present the idea was held in this very hall with approximately 70 enthusiastic people attending. There was very little publicity about the meeting but such a large response was certainly encouraging and showed that the problem of pests especially animals was a well-recognised problem on the Port Hills and there is a will out there to combat and succeed in eliminating predators. At the same time the Government announced its policy on having New Zealand predator free by 2050. I cannot say emphatically that they stole the policy from us, or should I say from Jeremy, but it seems just a little more than a coincidence.

We said goodbye, to several Community Board appointed members to our Board during the year, Islay McLeod left to take up a position in Dunedin. Islay was replaced by Alexandra Davids who left at election time. Paula Smith was overcommitted and was replaced by Denis Aldridge who resigned at election time. Melanie Coker was not reappointed at election time but we were unanimous to ensure that she was appointed to the Board in her own right.

The three positions left vacant from the Community Boards were filled by Jed O’Donoghue, (Banks Peninsula), Lee Sampson, (Spreydon- Cashmere) and Darrell Latham (Linwood- Central- Heathcote). We welcome these new members knowing that their commitment will be as strong as their predecessors. Grant Miller left us at election time and I have been appointed by Selwyn Council as his replacement.

One of our stalwarts left us in November that being no other than Paul Tebbut. What an inspiration this man is; he was leader for the East Enders and Omahu work party plus the Ranger for Omahu and a very capable Board Member. We will surely miss his contribution to the Society but we can take comfort that he will always be available for advice when we need it. Paul had quite rightly decided to focus more attention on his personal life and leisure time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the Board and the Society. The work and dedication of Paul will be remembered for a very long time Thank you again Paul. Paul has been replaced as leader of the Eastenders by Graeme Paltridge and Ian Johnston at Omahu; we welcome these men in taking on their respective positions.

Sally Tripp from Governors Bay has made a substantial donation sufficient to plant some 2000 trees over the next three years in Ohinetahi to assist in the regeneration. It is humbling to have people like Sally think so much of the Society and the natural environment. Donations such as these must be an incentive to continue with the dream of Harry Ell and his passion for the Port Hills.

Harry our named tui seems to have passed on to the great native bush in the sky as nothing has been seen of him for some considerable time now. He was a mature bird when first released so may have reached the end of his life. Still there may be offspring of his on the Peninsula so let’s hope so as the latest reports show that the population is increasing.

Once again it has to be mentioned that the Society continues to operate as a unit focussed on the preservation of the Port Hills. This is accomplished by our dedicated Board and our never tiring Secretary. The dedication of the board members never fails to impress me and we did have one new member appointed, Paula Jameson. Yes the Jameson name is the same as our founder John and Paula is his daughter. What an asset Paula has been as she brings a wealth of history to Society as a whole plus being a very fine Board Member. Lastly I must again thank our Vice President Jeremy who gives unfailing commitment to the Society and myself so allow me Jeremy to personally thank you.

Bill Woods March 2017

President.

**OHINETAHI REPORT 2016**

The work party consisting of 8 (just reduced to 7) keen and eager volunteers have continued to concentrate on keeping the tracks in good condition, keeping our boundaries tidy and to hunting down pests, both animal and weed.

The tracks need cutting in early summer and again in autumn and a team of 3 spent 13 weeks on this task. Another 13 weeks were spent tidying overhanging growth, benching and other general track maintenance. This is also a good time to keep an eye open for any weed plants.

We spent 3 weeks planting – 100 kanukas at the bottom of Cass Ridge track, and close to 100 plants from our nursery plants in the twitch patch and near the junction of Ngaio and O’Farrells tracks. The rest of the year was spent in weed clearance.

This year we continued our assault on spur valerian. We have had a helicopter spraying in hard-to- get places and contractors in as well as the efforts of our own work party. The area under attack was from Mt Ada to just north of Watlings track. We are indebted to Di Carter, Port Hills Ranger, for her planning and organisation of this work, to Helen Greenep from ECan for her help with funding. We also have had funding from WWF and Rata Foundation. We still have a huge lot of spur valerian in the Faulkners track area that needs to be dealt with.

The Faulkners track area has been rather neglected since the earthquakes and as well as the spur valerian there is a lot of passion vine and old man’s beard in this area. We are slowly getting on top of things but still have a way to go. In late spring a hawthorn was spotted in all its flowering glory and a day in this area resulted in about a dozen hawthorns and several plum trees being exterminated with a further 2 days spent mopping up a few stragglers in difficult- to-reach spots. We are forever finding spindleberry in the reserve and it would probably be our biggest, in numbers, tree weed.

Ten Goodnature traps have been purchased to help in the fight against animal pests but have yet to be installed. Cashmere Rotary have been looking after traps set in the upper half of Bivvy track and have caught several stoats, ferrets and rats. We thank them for their help and interest. Last autumn, the willow trees at the start of Titoki track had a large infestation of giant willow aphid. The honey dew came down like rain from the trees and the wasps buzzed about getting rather drunk and stupid from feasting on it. This infestation does not seem to have harmed the trees.

The work party meets every Tuesday and we welcome new members. Ohinetahi is a great place to have your lunch while enjoying million dollar views.

Anne Kennedy

March 2017

Eastenders: Annual Report – 2016

In the past twelve months the Eastenders have continued to work mainly on the hills nearer to their home base – between Sumner and Cashmere. Unfortunately bad weather caused more days to be cancelled than we would have liked – a total of 8 days were lost due to rain and snow – which has resulted in a total of 660 hours, down on last year. Numbers remain constant with new members joining and old friends retiring in almost equal numbers (although we have had a late surge of new members in the latter part of the year injecting some useful ‘young blood’ into the team). Needless to say these new members will need careful mentoring to get the most use out of them!

Several outings were spent ridding the Cavendish Saddle of broom. This is a continuing problem and every few years sees us back to clear the saddle in order to protect the views over to the harbour and down into Lyttelton. We also extended the area cleared to the north facing slopes of Mt Cavendish itself. Barnett Park in Redcliffs was another favourite site that had good attendances. Although the western flanks of the upper valley remain closed due to rockfall danger we had days improving and clearing the track up the eastern side. This track (The Eastenders Track) is very well used but is unfortunately riven with under-runners which continue to slump meaning maintenance work is a regular necessity. The group, along with the rangers, investigated moving the track above where it is at present but after much discussion it was decided that the best course of action would be to install better drainage and permanent bridges across the slips. Clearly this will be a more long-term project and we are hopeful that the council can find the funding in the near future.

During the winter months several days were spent at Victoria Park, maintaining drains and improving Latters Spur and the Harry Ell tracks. One particular day in August was called off early due to snow drifting across the track! Wind chill factors saw many a teeth chattering that day. In September we returned to Captain Thomas Track behind Sumner where we re-aligned the bottom part of the track after the installation of the new bridge. We are hopeful that the work will keep the mountain bikers happy and stop the use of ‘shortcuts’ made by some users. Other sites worked on include the area around the Gondola top station removing broom and gorse, our usual foray into Victoria Park preparing planting sites for the Arbor Day plantings and some return work on Scarborough Bluffs and up to the top of Evans Pass.

Our usual BBQ at the Rangers HQ in Victoria Park was well attended and my thanks go to Hamish Masters for the fine spread. After some years as the convenor I have decided to take a break and the mantle has been taken over by Graeme Paltridge who will, no doubt, have as much enjoyment as I have had organising the Eastenders for another number of years. Thanks to all members for their work and good humour and a special thanks goes to Hamish, Nick, Paul and Di for their continued support.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2017

**Omahu Bush: Annual Report 2016**

2016 was another busy year and despite a few weather problems, our small group managed to complete 1,121 hours which is up on last year’s record total of 905. The work was very much ‘business as usual’ with the usual mixture of track maintenance, weed control, particularly gorse and broom, and the, once again, repairs to the vandalised sign at the main car park. Trees for Canterbury donated 100 trees which were planted in August and so far, seem to be doing well. Seasonal grazing continues on the grassy area which is the main tool in keeping the regenerating native tussock healthy.

This year we were joined by additional volunteers on two occasions, 11 members of the Pioneer Tramping Club and 25 Lincoln High School students. Both occasions helped us to make serious inroads into the control of gorse along the fence line.

Animal pest control continues and Helen Hills regularly helps with checking and re-baiting traps. At the end of the year we carried out a review of the traps, and it has been agreed to buy a further 5 Timms traps for possums and 10 DOC 200 traps for rats and possums to add to our arsenal and to replace some Fenn traps which are no longer efficient. Whilst there has been some evidence of pigs, these and deer don’t appear to have been a major problem during the year.

The visit by Lincoln High School led to the starting of an ongoing project for the school and we are pleased to be able to introduce school students to our work and hopefully among them will be some future conservationists. We’ve bought 10 Goodnature traps which will be installed and managed by the students as the first part of the project. As well as the normal routine jobs on the reserve which they will do over time, monitoring and bird counts may be possible and weta motels have even been talked about.

As well as retiring as Eastenders convenor I have now handed over the organising of the team to the more than capable Ian Johnston and so have retired as Omahu Bush’s ‘Honorary Ranger’. I will however be carrying on with looking after the traps, for the time being at least.

Paul Tebbutt

March 2017