

## **SUMMIT ROAD SOCIETY (Inc) PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2010.**

As this is my first report to the Annual Meeting I wondered where to begin. The obvious answer is at the beginning, but that is not as easy as it sounds. The Society's work does not start and finish on any particular date or time. The work continues and sometimes overlaps one year to another. So I will report to the meeting the last year as I saw it and hope that some form of cohesion will result.

First of all it has been a pleasing year for me as President. Although I live at the foot of the Alps I have a passion for the Port Hills. Living so far away has its problems and I am involved with so many other community projects I feel that I am a little remiss in applying my complete attention to the Society.

Nevertheless I am blessed with having a very capable and understanding Board who seem to be able to handle the business side of the Society. In fact I want to mention the commitment of each and everyone on the Board. May I firstly mention my Deputy Jeremy Agar who willingly stands in for me should I not be available. Not only is he Deputy or Vice-President he is also a member of the East Enders so he practices what he believes in, a quality that deserves recognition. May I convey my personal thanks to you, Jeremy.

Along with Jeremy we also have other committed working party members on the Board. Anne Kennedy and Mike White are both committed to the jewel in our crown Ohinetahi Work Party. Anne is also a committed worker on the maintenance of Mount Vernon Park, a sister organisation protecting the Port Hills.

Robin Collie and Tony Edney are also ardent members of the Ohinetahi Work Party. Both Robin and Tony willingly give up their time to the betterment of the Bush. They concentrate, among other things, (planting and weed control to name a few) the trapping and poisoning of unwanted possums, rats and other pests that invade our land. It has been reported it is becoming obvious that with the control of these pests the younger plantings are doing well and the bird life is increasing. Surely a just reward for all the hard work and dedication.

Geoff Bendall is the leader of the East Enders. They are the guys that received a volunteering award for their work on the Port Hills, and Ron Ricketts who is responsible for the Weekenders and the roster for the Information Centre attendance at Victoria Park on Sunday afternoons. The Weekenders Work party was in danger of going into recess when John Goodrich took leave of absence, but Ron has managed to revive it albeit the numbers are still small. I would take this opportunity to canvass for members and others who have a bit of spare time and would like to do something practical for the Hills to contact any of the Work Party leaders. I am sure you will be welcomed with open arms.

Paul Tebbutt and Councillor Annette Foster, may I also thank you personally for your contribution for the personal work you do and your contribution as Board members in the governance of the Society.

Paul was involved in the organising our planting trip to Quail Island, and Annette is whenever possible on our field days and outings.

Joy Burt from DOC has been attending our Board meetings and has been a valuable contributor. We look forward to her continuing on in this role.

I will not be forgiven if I did not make a mention of Paul Loughton, our long standing and most capable Treasurer. Paul has diligently held the position of Treasurer for over twenty years. Certainly a milestone that cannot go unmentioned, so on behalf of all Society members, thank you Paul.

When I was asked if I would accept the nomination for President I said it would depend on my being able to work with the new Secretary. I do not need to make any more comment as I am still here. Thank you Jeff for your sterling work and your ability to keep us going at meetings without offending us.

It would be very remiss of me not to mention our very good friends from the City Council, the Park Rangers. The three we have most contact with are Paul Devlin, Nick Singleton and Di Carter. What a fine relationship we have with these dedicated helpful people and may it be long lasting.

I do not need to mention our founder, John Jameson, as he has been around for so long it seems like ever and the way he is looking at the moment he will still be a long time with us. John, can I say thank you for your input from all of us. I am sure the people of Canterbury, even New Zealand, will appreciate and experience the work of the Summit Road Society for years to come.

Everything that the Society does is worthy of mention but there have been several events during the past year that are worthy of special mention.

The first is the erection of a memorial plaque to commemorate the turning of the first sod over 100 years ago (1908) of the Summit Road at Coronation Reserve close to the Sign of the Kiwi. The unveiling was officiated by the Honourable Ruth Dyson Member of Parliament for the Port Hills on April 26 2009. This was a very notable event and well attended.

Our annual mid-winter Christmas dinner was held at the Sign of the Kiwi. A very enjoyable evening was had by all. Unfortunately this may have been our last at this venue due to the uncertainty of the tenure of the premises.

It is hoped that we may be able to continue there in the future, but only time will tell. The Sigglekows have always provided us with a first class moderately-priced meal and hospitable atmosphere. We will surely miss them but we wish them all the best for the future.

Do not worry we will still be having our mid-winter dinner as usual. At the moment we are looking at an alternative appropriate venue to try and achieve the same atmosphere as the Kiwi. A reminder for registering for this meal will be sent to members in due course.

The Society was represented at both Living Springs Open Day, and at Motukarara where DOC and Environment Canterbury had a Biodiversity Day both venues were well worth the effort. Interest in the Society and its part in the Port Hills is always a talking point.

Field trips to Quail Island and to Hinewai Reserve (Akaroa) were undertaken to assist with the work undertaken at both places, mostly planting and weed eradication.

Arbor Day has become an institutional event for the Society and the participation of the schools is rewarding in itself. One hopes that the planting of trees on the Port Hills will stimulate interest in the environment in those children and we will reap the benefit in future years.

Mike White and myself attended the launching of the Christchurch City Council's Biodiversity Strategy at the Gondola. There was praise for The Society from Paul Devlin regarding the Society's commitment to the Port Hills.

Our thanks go to Malcolm Douglass for facilitating our successful Planning Day. There were many enthusiastic participants all eager to ensure the future of the Port Hills and the expansion of the open space concept with additional land purchase for reserves. The opportunity to acquire land still arises every now and again. It is important that we are in a position to take advantage one way or another of the opportunity should and if land becomes available.

Goals have been set for the next few years in the promotion of the Society and raise our public profile.

Submissions were made on the Selwyn District Plan change 6 regarding the land below the 60 metre contour line. The hearing commissioner was told that the Society was firmly against any undesirable subdivision and increase of housing density anywhere on the Port Hills, but was mindful of the co-operation it had received from land owners regarding increased density of housing on the upper slopes with the increase of subdivision minimum to 100 hectares.

The Board felt that below the 60 metre contour the "horse had bolted" and there was little use in trying to preserve this area. In doing so our determination to preserve the upper slopes was strengthened this was conveyed to the commissioner in no uncertain terms. We await the outcome of the Commissioner.

The Board was approached by a land owner overlooking Lyttelton to seek our approval of a house being built within the upper slopes. This proposal was unacceptable to the Board. Consequently, the landowner was informed of our policy on houses such as these.

The Victoria Park roster is going quite well, where members attend the visitors centre for a few hours on a Sunday afternoon to publicise the Society and to seek out potential new members. It is also a means of answering questions from visitors re the Port Hills in general.

It is an enjoyable couple or three hours, plus it gives an opportunity to meet a lot of people who seem only too pleased to talk about the hills and where they came from. That has been my experience although it depends largely on the weather and the number of visitors to the centre. Ron and Sue Ricketts are responsible for this roster so if there are any members who would like to assist with turn I am sure that Ron or Sue would be only too happy to hear from you.

Our Activities & Promotions Committee plays a vital part in the promotion of the Society, but unfortunately it is a little thin on the ground as far as numbers go. Like the Victoria Park Roster we are looking for members who may not be up to working parties or Board work but feel they may be able to contribute in some other way that is not too time consuming.

If you think this may be for you let Jeff Long, myself or any Board member know and we will talk about it with you.

We are still maintaining applications for membership, albeit it not as many a one would like about one or two every month. Still, every new member helps maintain our total. There have been a few reductions in membership either from members moving away or just not renewing subscriptions.

Some memberships are reduced by the members passing away. Two notable recent ones are Barry Gerard who was on the Board for several years and represented the Society on Mount Vernon. Barry was Mountain Tussock Man he had a passion for tussocks and wanted them preserved on the Port Hills. Barry came from the high country and to have his beloved tussocks growing at his back door when he moved to town was so satisfying.

The other was Ferris Cross, who loved the bush and for years was actively involved in re-establishing the plant life in both Kennedy's and Omaha Bush. Our thoughts go out to both families.

It now seems certain that the Cashmere Park proposal will go ahead with Christchurch City committing three million dollars over the next three years for the purchase of land. The Society has been, and will continue to be, involved in the future of this park. The land comprises mostly the McVicar plantation on Dyers Road.

Lastly the Society was approached by the Nelson Family who own Omaha Bush to see if the Society was interested in the responsibility of the estate. Our reply was predictably yes. As a result meetings have been held and negotiations are now taking place with the possibility of involving Christchurch City Council. The final outcome is some way off yet and there will still be a lot of detail to be attended to. It is quite exciting and humbling to think that the Society is held in sufficiently high regard to be considered competent to take control of this important bush.

Thank you

Bill Woods.  
President.