



a passion for the Port Hills

Newsletter, November 2009

Note from our new President



Greetings everybody. It is with some excitement and maybe a little apprehension that I take over from Mike White who has retired from the position of President.

Mike's term involved the launching of our new book *Port Hills - Protect and Enjoy* and celebrating the first 60 years of the Society. Mike leaves a big hole to fill and a challenge to carry the Society forward in its objective to preserve the Port Hills

for future generations to use and enjoy. This is a formidable task but one that is worthy of achieving. Although it has never been easy, the pressures today are just as great as ever to stop the advancement of subdivision on Christchurch's beloved Port Hills.

I am aware of those challenges; firmly believing with the help and determination of all our members we will accomplish a subdivision free open space Port Hills that will be the pride of Canterbury or even New Zealand.

I have been passionate about the Port Hills for a very long time now and have been actively involved on the Board for over ten

years. First I was acting as a Selwyn Council representative and now as an individual member.

I have also been involved with the Summit Road Protection Authority for six years, serving one term as President. Also I served one term (3 years) on the Summit Road Protection Authority Advisory Committee representing Environment Canterbury.

The best way forward for the Society is to increase its membership, the greater the numbers we have the more we will be listened to. I have a few ideas that I will put to the Board in the coming months for their consideration.

Finally I look forward to serving you as President. My door is always open should any member wish to make contact on any issue regarding the future or function of the Society.

My phone number is (03) 318 4825
and my Email is billwoods@slingshot.co.nz

Don't forget I only hold the position of President. It is the members who make the Society strong and participation by members is vital for the continuance and prosperity of the Society.

Bill Woods, President

Plaque Unveiling

November 2008 was the centenary of the 'turning of the first sod' on the Summit Road, which took place in Coronation Reserve, close to the Sign of the Kiwi. The Society discussed with the City Council the placing of a plaque to commemorate this important event, and a formal unveiling ceremony took place on April 26, 2009.

Coronation Hill itself is native tussock grassland on the hill beyond the Sign of the Kiwi, and planted vegetation around the Kiwi itself. On the whole, the reserve has a vegetative cover fairly typical of the surrounding Port Hills. There are a number of volcanic dykes which were formed by molten rock filling cracks radiating from the volcanic core that were caused by immense subterranean pressures millions of years ago. There is a large sill of rock which was formed by molten lava coming off one of the largest dykes and imbedding itself in the base rock. This feature has the most geological importance in the Coronation Hill Reserve. Many dykes can be seen along the Coronation Hill Track which starts and finishes at the Sign of the Kiwi.

Coronation Hill was one of Harry Ell's original reserves on the Port Hills, and was named to commemorate the coronation of King George V in 1911.

John Jameson talked about the significance of the turning of the first sod, and MP Ruth Dyson formally unveiled the plaque. There followed a guided tour of the Coronation Reserve. Lindsey and Siggy from Sign of the Kiwi then very generously provided members with bring some drinks and nibbles.



John Jameson and other Harry Ell descendants.



John Jameson and MP Ruth Dyson shake hands at the unveiling of the plaque.

'Weekenders' Work Party

Once a month or so, on a Saturday, a small group of volunteers go up into our lovely hills to help out with weeding, planting and plant maintenance for approximately 3 hours each session. If you'd like to help out with this enjoyable and valued program (and have some fun!) please contact Sue or Ron Ricketts: (03) 337 3544 or Email: ron@ricketts.gen.nz to find out more. Look forward to hearing from you....

Victoria Park Information Centre

The Society provides a volunteer to attend the Information Centre above the main carpark at Victoria Park each Sunday for a couple of hours, usually either 1–3pm or 2–4pm. We are there to answer any queries visitors may have, inform about the park and the natural heritage we enjoy, and promote membership of the Society if that's appropriate. It's a rewarding opportunity to engage with other folk who enjoy the hills, and help the Society to maintain a profile in the community. If you'd like to join the team with an occasional commitment to volunteer, please contact **Sue Ricketts** for a chat and further information: (03) 337 3544.

 Summit Road Society (Inc) PO Box 17-719, Christchurch Website: www.summitroadsociety.org.nz Email: secretary@summitroadsociety.org.nz		
President	Bill Woods	03 318 4825
Vice-President	Jeremy Agar	328 9956
Secretary	Jeff Long	384 8463
Treasurer	Paul Loughton	322 7082
Board Members	Geoff Bendall	384 9254
	Robin Collie	332 1477
	Tony Edney	329 9868
	Anne Kennedy	377 0364
	Ron Ricketts	337 3544
	Paul Tebbutt	384 3086
	Mike White	03 312 1551
<i>Honorary Life Member</i>	John Jameson	354 5925
Representatives		
Selwyn District Council	Annette Foster	347 8651
Hagley/Ferrymead	John Freeman	326 6406
Lytelton/Mt Herbert	Jeremy Agar	328 9956
Port Hills Rangers	Paul Devlin	332 5627
Eastenders work party	Geoff Bendall	384 9254
Ohinetahi	Mike White	03 312 1551
Weekenders	Ron Ricketts	337 3544
<p>We are a voluntary society working to enhance, preserve and protect the natural environment, beauty and open character of the Port Hills of Banks Peninsula for people to enjoy.</p> <p>We need and welcome contributions to our work through memberships, donations and corporate sponsorships, participation in work parties (non-members welcome - but why not join us as well!), and bequests.</p>		

In memory of...

Jim Dunford

Jim Dunford died on 27 August after a short illness. Jim was an enthusiastic and regular member of the team who work and manage our Ohinetahi Reserve above Governors Bay. His love for the natural environment of the Port Hills was obvious not only by his membership of our gang over a number of years but also due to his volunteer work for environmental and community groups around Lyttelton where he lived. He also helped man the Victoria Park Visitors Centre on Sunday afternoons on behalf of the Society. Last year Jim began to slow up, but he determinedly continued to struggle up the hill every Tuesday with the team to do his bit on the Reserve. When he finally had to call it a day he left a big hole in the team, and it was hard to accept his retirement. But we also knew how hard it must have been for Jim to be forced to give up his commitment in helping to nurture the natural environment of the Port Hills. This friendly, sociable and hard working man will be remembered by the team as we continue the work on our Reserve. We offer our sympathy to Jim's wife Sally and his family.

Ferries Cross

Ferries was a past member of the Society who worked long and hard on planting on the Port Hills, especially around Kennedys Bush and Omahu. Ferries passed way on Sept 22 this year, and in lieu of flowers, donations to the Summit Road Society were requested.

It is hoped some further plantings will be enabled as a result of the family's request, to whom we send our condolences.

"The Eastenders"

The Summit Road Society's Men of Might. Barnett Park 7/8/09

Many thanks to you Geoff and your wonderful team of dedicated Eastenders. Where would the world be without you!



Xmas function

Sunday 29 November 2009

Breakfast at Governors Bay then walk in Ohinetahi. Refer to the flyer already sent, and ring the Secretary at 384 8463 if you wish to register.



Arbor Day Plantings 2009

Once again, the Society organised plantings on the Port Hills to mark Arbor Day. The event is somewhat a tradition for the Society, and one in which we are delighted to work with the City Council's Ranger Service in involving children in practical conservation work on the Port Hills. This year we had busloads of children from Rudolph Steiner, Cashmere Primary, and Cobham Intermediate Schools.

The planting site was the same as last year, in Victoria Park, overlooking the Bowenvale Valley. Around 500 trees were planted, and Summit Road Society members were on hand to assist on the day. A good time was had by all!

Living Springs Open Day

Living Springs in Allandale Valley recently hosted an open day to launch a new approach to the accommodation and activities that the centre provides.

Many of you will already know that the centre was formed in the 1970's by the philanthropic actions of two families. The Christian values underpinning the centre has seen it host a wide variety of youth and community groups.

Apart from the community style accommodation Living Springs now also caters for users demanding high quality accommodation and catering. Having attended the open day I can attest to the catering bit. Yum.

Of great interest to the Summit Road Society is the increasing emphasis on outdoor recreation and conservation. To quote from their website www.livingsprings.co.nz "Conservation and appreciation of the land and outdoor pursuits, are integral to Living Springs."

They are planning to fence off a large bush gully, and as neighbours we have already begun to share knowledge in bush restoration. Our shared goals bode well for the future of both of these special places.



Tony Edney (left) and Jeff Long

Quick Quiz

WHO WERE THEY?

Three Passes—Evans, Dyers and Gebbies.

 *Who were these men?*

Two ladies—Ellas Track and Mt Ada, these are just south of the top of Kennedys Bush Track.

 *Who were Ella and Ada?*

One Reserve—Scotts Reserve is situated above Huntsbury Spur and the eastern side of Bowenvale Valley.

 *Who was Mr Scott?*

F. J. **Evans** was the master of the surveying ship Acheron, 1849-50. J. **Dyer** from 1850 owned about 100 acres of land in Governors Bay north of the wharf. John **Gebbie** came with the Deans brothers in February, 1843 to settle in Riccarton. In May 1845 he moved to land of his own at the head of Lyttelton Harbour.

Ella was the wife of the Government Surveyor, A G Allom who helped Harry Ell survey a better line for Dyers Pass Road. **Ada** was Harry Ell's wife Adelaide. John Flinders **Scott** owned and farmed land from Mt Pleasant to Rapaki Track and was responsible for roading and subdividing land in the lower Avoca, Horotane and Bowenvale Valleys.

Answers

Port Hills Update – People, Plants and Priorities

It has been a productive year for progress toward biodiversity management on the Port Hills, with another year of prioritised planning set for 2010. The annual cycle of weed removal, planting, monitoring and planning creates a great seasonal mix of work involving staff, summer students, contractors, other agencies, and a wonderful pool of volunteers. Volunteers play a key role in improving biodiversity in our local region, and are involved in all aspects of this seasonal mix: from hours of weed control effort over the spring, summer and autumn; to planting thousands of trees over winter and then maintaining them through lush periods in spring and autumn; and the contribution of those with a skilled eye to understanding distributions and health of the rarer species.

A fine example of community contribution is the Barnett Park project. To kick start a 10-year plan to remove boneseed from the valley and rock faces, regular volunteer days were set up at the end of 2008. School groups and a growing group of local volunteers have spent many hot hours clearing boneseed, making good systematic progress in the upper valley. This ground work has been complemented by contracted crews on ropes removing boneseed from the cliffs above. The initial goal of applying for funding for replacement planting in the main gullies was put on hold due to recent budget cuts. Thankfully, Project Crimson approached with a timely offer of financial support from Meridian Energy for a local community restoration project. The long-term

goals for Barnett Park appealed and they were happy to fund 900 plants, with an offer of similar financial contribution over the next five years. The Summit Road Society's Eastenders provided immeasurable effort in the preparation and undertaking of the planting day with Meridian Staff on the 8th August. The day was arranged at short notice and wouldn't have been such a success without the assistance of these willing and dedicated men to get the planting sites grubbed, and all 900 plants carried up the valley in time. We look forward to the next nine years of community involvement and progress in this valley worthy of attention.

Businesses are also starting to give hands-on help to conservation efforts as part of "greening" their work places. The Grand Chancellor Hotel has introduced schemes to reduce volumes of laundry, food and paper waste, as well as a scheme to support staff give a hand with local conservation projects. So far the team has spent a number of hours crawling on hands and knees in Reuter Reserve removing mountains of Old Man Beard. They've since returned to plant ngaio to fill the void created by the summer removal of Old Mans Beard in the Sugarloaf gullies.

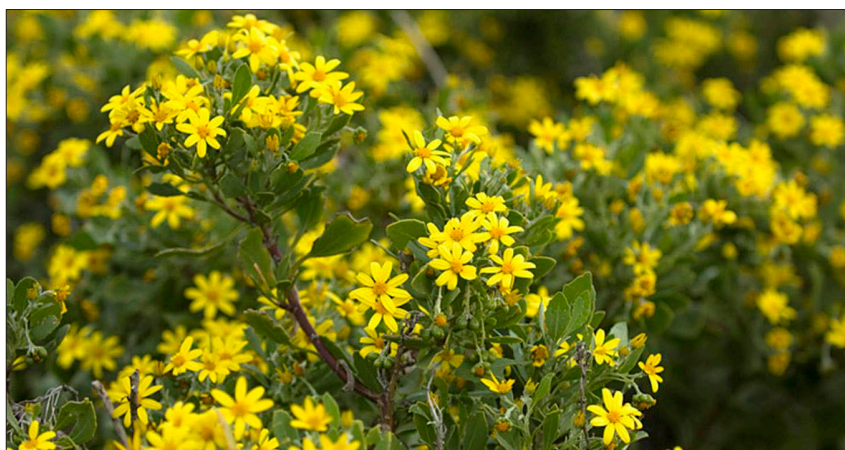
People also play an important role as informal educators in understanding biodiversity goals. At a recent planting day adjacent to a new subdivision, we had the pleasure of a neighbour who came to join in. She was a relatively recent immigrant to New Zealand and a keen gardener. After striking up conversation about the NZ Flora

and propagating plants, I was able to reveal to her that the pigs ear (*Cotyledon orbiculata*) that was planted in her garden was very weedy on the dry eastern end of the Port Hills. She was particularly interested in the local flora and was more than willing to learn of other exotic weeds that threaten the special native plants in nearby rock outcrops. It wasn't long before she was in contact again to let me know she had removed the pigs ear and had informed several neighbours of the "weediness" of some of the plants in their gardens.

Learning goes both ways in the community and I was particularly grateful this year for the botanical skill, commitment and passion of a couple of local fern enthusiasts. I was fortunate to be given the generosity of their time to partake in an exciting rock scramble to see local populations of rare ferns. Without this excursion and sharing of knowledge, I would have been completely unaware of these local rarities and none the wiser of their existence or potential threats to their long-term wellbeing.

Planning has been set for the next financial year for continued removal of boneseed, banana passionfruit and old mans beard, as well as a few other less widely distributed species such as Darwins barberry, Italian buckthorn, Japanese honeysuckle and cotoneaster (in addition to the usual pastoral weeds). Hawthorn had a fair amount of attention last year, so the boxthorn under the gondola will be targeted this year. Further trials will continue to try and find a successful treatment for polypodium fern, which is a major threat to both rock outcrop communities as well as forest understoreys.

Monitoring of the rock outcrops will continue, based on the previous two years of successful surveying turning up potentially new populations of threatened plant species, such as the Banks Peninsula local forget-me-not (*Myosotis australis* var *lytteltonensis*). This year the survey will focus on the rocky outcrops on Misty Peaks Reserve, behind Akaroa.



Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*). Despite the good looks, it's a noxious weed.

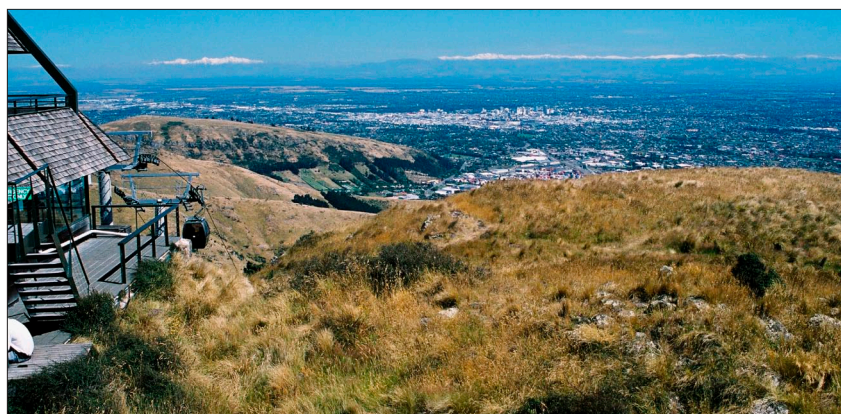
Continued next page

The volunteer planting programme will continue at the current level of around 5000 plants in 2010. Due to budget constraints however, the contract plantings will slow over the next three years to approximately half of the 39,000 planted this year. The proportions of plantings will remain much the same with half the plantings being forest species, and the other half split between flax gully plantings and tussock plantings. Reported observations of reduced sediment yield, as a possible consequence of some of the planted gullies and reduced levels of grazing is encouraging.

We can plan and prioritise our work in order to make progress toward achieving our biodiversity goals, however it is the unplanned, unexpected and inspiring contribution of people that really make the goal of achieving biodiversity a complete pleasure and inspiration. We thank you immensely for your support, time and effort – it all makes a huge difference.

Di Carter

Port Hills Ranger, August 2009



Christchurch's Biodiversity Strategy

Bill Woods and Mike White represented the Summit Road Society at the launch of the Christchurch City Council's Biodiversity Strategy at the Gondola late in July. The choice of venue was a bit ironic for the Society, as we fought so hard in years gone by to avoid the construction of the Gondola in order to protect the biodiversity of Mt. Cavendish Reserve upon which the Gondola is built!

The Deputy Minister of Conservation, the Hon. Kate Wilkinson did the honours. She emphasized the importance of biodiversity and conservation to tourism and the economy. (we wonder then, why did the Government reduce the Dept. of Conservation's funding in the recent Budget?) Paul Devlin gave an excellent talk about the work he and his dedicated team of rangers are doing on the Port Hills and now extended to the whole of the Peninsula. Paul praised the work of the Summit Road Society and the dedication of the members regarding their work in maintaining the tracks and eradicating pests.

The Strategy was beautifully presented in an impressive publication with many excellent photos, and basically concentrates on the indigenous biological diversity of the City Council's district, including Banks Peninsula. It is directed towards the protection and enhancement of all living organisms, native to New Zealand within the Council's boundaries. The Port Hills are included within the Christchurch Concept Plan of the Strategy.

Port Hills protection of rare rock outcrop plants such as *Carex inopinata* and the continuing protection of tussock grasslands of the eastern Port Hills from exotic shrub weeds is required.

Regarding the Port Hills forests, management of the south-west Port Hills will encourage the continued expansion of native forest on the wetter parts of the Port Hills. This is a significant area for bush birds that visit the City. An eventual forest area of approximately 2000 ha is possible. Continued predator control to encourage increased numbers of bush birds such as the bell bird, kereru, tomtit and morepork is important. Options for the reintroduction of some indigenous bird species and a larger predator management area in the medium to long term can be investigated.

In addition, the Port Hills southern aspect is included in the separate Banks Peninsula Concept Plan. Large parts of the Harbour basin side of the Port Hills now have regenerating bush. A highlight is the old growth forest remnant containing mature totara and matai near Rapaki.

Large areas at the head of the Harbour and above Lyttelton are managed for conservation purposes. Almost complete cover of the upper parts of the crater rim with bush is feasible.

It is encouraging to know that the City's plans for the Port Hills is exactly in line with our own, and that we have working towards these ends for the past 60 years. The Strategy publication is worth a look at and is available at the City Council offices or from our Secretary Jeff Long.



Quail Island Planting Trip – August 30th

It was a mild, Nor' West Sunday when 24 hardy souls congregated at the Black Cat Ferry terminal in Lyttelton for the boat trip across the harbour to Quail Island. Half of us were from the Summit Road Society and the remainder a mix of experienced volunteers from the Otamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust along with friends, helpers and other interested people.

One of the trusts aims is to restore the indigenous vegetation on Otamahua/Quail Island and to provide a refuge for locally extinct, or rare and endangered species of the region and to this end they hold regular volunteer days of which this was one. The Trust works in partnership with DOC who assist in the management of the island.

Before leaving we were asked to make sure we hadn't inadvertently packed any mice in our backpacks - this produced a look of horror on some of the faces!

The journey across to the island was uneventful and once ashore we hiked the short distance up to meet the Rangers. We were going to plant on the Northwest side of the island, facing Cass and Governors Bays, which meant a 15-minute hike. On the way we passed some of the earlier planting efforts, these now filling in nicely with few gaps.

The area to be planted was in a natural basin and the previous cover (mostly Cocksfoot) had been sprayed off ready. The plan was to plant 5-600 natives, mostly Kanuka and Pittosporums and we set to with enthusiasm. Once planted (quite deep – no stakes are put in and the plants need to survive the sometimes fierce winds), a square of old carpet is placed around each plant for weed suppression. When asked if the carpet was all natural fibre the reply came 'No – we can't afford to be choosy and take all that is given!' This carpet remains in place (hopefully) for much longer than the recycled apple trays that we have been using in our plantings – you could see the remains of carpet on some plantings done two years previously.

Lunchtime came around quickly and people found a good spot to shelter



from the wind at the edge of the planting area amongst seven-year-old flax bushes that had done remarkably well!

The push to eliminate mice from the island has come about because the trust wishes to re-introduce invertebrates and this will not be successful until the mice have gone. Poison drops have been done and monitoring is now being undertaken to see how effective this has been. Anecdotal evidence to date has been good and trapping is continuing. The main danger is in the self re-introduction from the mainland. Although mice can't swim as well as rats, the distance is not great on the south side of the island, at Moepuku Point and King Billy Island and so special notice is being taken in that area. However unlike rats, mice will tend to inhabit small areas rather than ranging far and wide and should make poisoning a little easier if the needs arise.

After lunch we continued planting for another hour before packing up. The final planted tally - 900 plants – considerably more than anyone had expected.

As we had more than an hour to kill before the boat returned to pick us up some of us decided to explore the island. A trip anti-clockwise around the NW tip, via the ships graveyard and the old leper colony site back to the jetty was embarked upon, with a break at Walkers Beach to fossick on the shell-littered sand.

The trip back to Lyttelton was a little more exciting than the one to the island. The wind had picked up considerably and there was much whooping to be heard as the Black Cat Ferry bounced over the waves, with water crashing over the boat!

This was a wonderful trip and one I urge other people to do if you haven't been for a while – my previous visit was in the 90's and it is remarkable how the planting has changed the whole feeling of the place.

For more information go to www.quailisland.org.nz

Paul Tebbutt

Growing up on the Port Hills

Member Janey Thomas has been a real asset to the Society and as a youthful member has helped to create a more modern aspect to our activities. She has served on the Board and A & P Committee in the past and volunteered her skills as graphic designer to produce our newsletter in recent years and oversaw the design of our website. She has also provided other promotional material from time to time. Below she writes of her and her family's affection for the Port Hills. [Mike White]

I joined the Summit Road Society in March 2001 because for years I'd been witnessing considerable changes to the Port Hills and in the hill suburbs and I wanted to be part of a greater 'voice' who advocated a level-headed approach to conservation and the protection of this beautifully rugged and historically significant place.

My affection for the tawny slopes and volcanic crags of the Crater Rim goes back a little way, perhaps I should begin where it started for me.

In 1972 my parents bought a 10-acre lifestyle block on the south-west side of Cashmere Hills, overlooking Cashmere Valley, land once owned by a farmer called Mr Brar. For my family, the hills hold many special memories, so it was no surprise that my mother wanted to return. She had spent many happy years growing up in Hackthorne Road, just above the school. Her father F. Lewis Davie (grandson of Cyrus Davie), and a surveyor like his father and grandfather, would no doubt have been involved in many projects near and far from Cashmere. My mother once told me that Grandfather would on occasion, be called on by the tireless Harry Ell to lend advice while The Sign of the Takahe was being built.

Back in 1972, it must have taken some vision to see the potential of that barren section, because then it was nothing more than an exposed hillside with dirt track, rocks, tussocks, broom and matagouri.



For several years, my parents put up fences, water pipes, upgraded the dirt track so our old Zephyr could get in to a flat area excavated 50m from the road. That area was on solid rock, it had to be blasted in places and our house was to be built there.

In those days the place was called "the section" and as kids we spent considerable time exploring the place while our parents worked hard planting. We probably did help but kids don't remember these sorts of activities. On one occasion my sister and I slept in a covered trailer—a nylon awning over a metal frame. That night, it blew with such ferocity up on that hillside, I spent the whole night terrified

the trailer was going to roll down the hill. The fact that Dad had driven several 1.8m warratahs into the ground and secured the trailer to them didn't factor into my logic.

During this time, we lived in Hoon Hay, and our two dogs decided they preferred the section where all the rabbits roamed, so would frequently trot all the way up the hill and wait to be rescued. This always seemed to happen at night, and we'd see their eyes in the headlights as they emerged from the tussocks, tails wagging firmly believing all would be forgiven.

The Fraemohs house was built in 1977 and within weeks of moving in a few southerly storms broke some of the south facing windows and they were quickly replaced with thicker glass. Many years of hard work and planting followed, wherever you drove a spade into the ground you hit a rock—without fail. We built walls of rocks from all the ones we dug out. We lost more than one heavy steel crowbar to the under-runners in the horse paddock. Dad would hide them there, instead of lugging them back to the house. Of course we could never find them again. We cut, hacked, dug and pulled out thousands of broom plants. So easy when they are young and the ground is wet, tough to get out when mature and in dry soil.



In the following years, the slopes of Cashmere Valley's tussock mantle began to change as thousands of pines were planted. My cousin Robert was subcontracted presumably by McVicar Timber and he would visit us while pointing out how far he'd walked and how many trees he'd planted that day. All that investment was in the end wasted, but fortunately not for recreational users if the CCC's vision is realised.

We kept a couple of horses which we rode with considerable freedom from Victoria Park to Kennedys Bush. There were very few gates in those days. Other riding trails would include two areas aptly named Slip Paddock—now Westmorland and the extension to Longhurst Tce. They were nothing more than hillsides riddled with gullies and clay slips.

At one stage the local ranger lived at The Sign of the Kiwi, his daughter Leana and I would ride together and I would spend nights up at the Kiwi which were fun. One evening, the mist rolled in as we happily played amongst the old pines growing next to the cattle stop. Amongst the branches I found an old carving of a lion's head with horns which was part of an old cracked stump. It gave me quite a fright! I showed Mr Johnston and within weeks, the pine was trimmed back to reveal the

old Toll Gate, originally installed in 1922.

Snow and flooding seemed to happen every winter for a few years when we first lived there, Cashmere Valley would fill up with water and we would watch the farmer row a boat across the paddocks, just missing the tops of the fences. Slowly the trees grew, of course the fastest and most resilient were the natives and more of those varieties were planted. The original pines Dad planted provided initial shelter for our precious garden.

Another notable feature of our property were the three quarries—the stone of which makes up part of The Sign of the Takahe, just 200m up the road. One of those quarries eventually took my horse's life.

Walking was our recreation. My husband and I explored all the tracks many times over on the hills, using Mark Pickering's invaluable guide. Mt Herbert beckoned us about twice a year—on one such occasion, on the Port Levy saddle to The Sign of the Packhorse route, a SW change arrived and we just made it to the Packhorse as large snowflakes began to fall in earnest. What a sight—as we bundled ourselves into the cosy hut—there was this fellow, feet up, reading the paper, in front of a roaring fire paying no attention to the blizzard outside!

Thirty years later, our home is surrounded by bush, is sheltered and a haven for many birds—native and exotic. It's a credit to my late parents and I'm sure appreciated by the new owners.

My husband and I moved north in 2003 and we chose the rural North Canterbury town of Amberley as our base. There we set up our business (tourism and graphic design), built a house and now in the process of establishing a garden—we cope with similar windy conditions (Norwesters are famous up here) but not one rock lies beneath the surface, it's all loam and easy to dig (in the cooler months). The bird-life is similar to Cashmere Hills, we lack the Kereru (much missed) but it's nice to see some new faces too; Skylark, Swallow, Pipit, Pukeko...

Mt Cass and Mt Grey offer good hill climbs and wonderful vistas at the top. There is not the same level of attention taken with protecting nor planting in these recreational areas yet. Much of Mt Grey is still pine plantation and the adjoining (presumably protected) bush is a sad mix of pine, gorse and beech. It could be so much more. We face the same pressures on our environment; not so many concerns with urban sprawl but the harnessing of natural resources. Let's hope common sense prevails.

I miss the Port Hills, for on clear days you can see Mt Cook, on other days you're shrouded in sea mist, with only the shadowy outlines of the volcanic outcrops visible. It's a beautiful, wild and exposed place, yet within the gullies and sheltered areas there's a remarkable rich diversity of life. A very worthwhile environment to protect.

Janey Thomas (neé Lovell-Smith)



Biodiversity Field Days

Working to promote biodiversity in Canterbury, the recent field-days provided a 'one-stop shop' for those wanting to answer the 'how', 'where and 'why' of biodiversity restoration.

The workshops, presentations and displays were aimed at helping individuals and organisations:

- Plan effectively
- Organise and motivate a restoration group
- Find funding and establish a group
- Develop and prepare sites for native tree plantings
- Control weeds and pests
- Link with other groups and organisations
- Eco-sourcing strategies

The Summit Road Society had a stand, and it was great to talk with others about what they were doing, and how. All very Impressive!

Well done to DOC and ECAN who were the main drivers/sponsors for the two days.

◀ Former President Mike White promoting the Society at the Biodiversity Field Day.



PHOTO: NICK GROVES

Mt Cavendish MTB track

The Gondola people have successfully applied to the Minister for permission to develop a mountain bike track from the Gondola down the slope facing Godley Head to just below the Summit Road.

Their plan showed the track mainly on the slope toward Lyttelton, which meant there wouldn't be much obvious development visible from the road.

However, judging from the area which has now been mown prior to developing the track itself, the path has changed considerably and will be very visible from the Summit Road, especially when considering the amount of earthworks in berms etc.

DOC seem concerned about it and stopped work initially, but it now seems that the work may possibly start again.

The Summit Road Society has written to DOC demanding that work cease, and it has, but there is some thought apparently that the track outline was only indicative, and that the actual track positioning may vary from that in the concession document.

Update: DOC, the CCC and the concessionaire have now agreed on the layout of the track, and most of the track cutting work has now been completed.