



AROUND THE RESERVES EASTENDERS

It's been a bit of a mixed bag for the Eastenders over the past six months. Three work parties were cancelled because of inclement weather and one because of Covid restrictions. We did however get a number of jobs done. The Taylors Mistake Track and the Scarborough Bluffs Track respectively were tidied up, re-benched where needed and drains cleared and realigned. Our remaining work parties were all on the Linda Woods Reserve. We had two sessions sweeping the Horotane Valley area for nassella tussock, a pest plant, with its removal required under the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Plan. A number of the offending tussocks were found, with the team developing an increasing proficiency in recognising these plants amongst the native silver tussock which is abundant on the Reserve's upper slopes. Two other work parties were held in Avoca Valley to augment public planting sessions and also remove boxthorn bushes, which as the name suggests, can be fiendishly difficult to cut out without being impaled by their unyielding thorns. Although the Eastenders will still be involved with tracks and reserves on the eastern Port Hills, as the Linda Woods Reserve management plan develops, more time will be spent on specific projects there.

Graeme Paltridge

OHINETAHI

Ohinetahi Predator Control

Winter has seen low predator numbers caught and this has been confirmed in recent monitoring. Summer normally brings an increase in mustelid catch.

Murray Smith has joined the trapping group, and will take on a greater role in coordinating the group's efforts. Murray is a regular at the Tuesday work group and has spent the last few months shadowing members on their trap runs to become familiar with the Reserve, and fills in on members' trap runs when needed. He has joined me in undertaking chew card and tracking tunnel monitoring.

A recent grant from Pest Free Banks Peninsula will mean that our network of traps will expand over the next year. An additional 44 traps and bait stations are in the process of being purchased and installed. This will increase the trap density within the existing area under predator control, and expand the network further south within the area between Living Springs and the Council's Orongomai Reserve. Four of the new AT220 auto-resetting possum and rat traps will be deployed in hard-to-reach areas.

Greg Gimblett



Eastender Greg Clarke musing over the difference between nassella tussock and silver tussock



The trusty Mountain Mule pack carrying a new DOC200 to Bivvy Track

Ohinetahi Work Party

It has been an off-on last six months with rain and covid restrictions cancelling about a third of our work days. Still, rain is much preferable to drought so we will just have to smile and carry on.

In July we cleared rows through the blackberry up by the Bellbird carpark and planted seedlings that work party member, Helen Hills, had raised from seed she collected in the Reserve. Three weeks were spent clearing around Sally's trees. Another week was spent clearing gorse and broom in Gordon's Garden.



Coprosma robusta damaged by hares



Ohinetahi volunteers Joan, David, Paul and Malcolm making cages to protect the plants from hares

Spring was slow to warm up this year but it finally got into gear and the plantings in the fire area are looking good. Unfortunately the grass and weeds are also having a great time and we are busy at the moment clearing tracks. Elderberries are in flower and can be easily spotted and dealt with. The hard part is getting to them.

A hare carcass was found on O'Farrells Track near Cass Ridge Track. Is this the animal that has been munching our *Coprosma robusta*, cabbage, kōwhai and ribbonwood trees? No doubt it has offspring around who will continue to hassle us.

Anne Kennedy

OMAHU

Omahu Fencing Project

The end is in sight! By the time you read this newsletter, the deer mesh around the perimeter of Omahu Reserve will be completed, along with all primary gate entrances into the Reserve. There will be some minor ongoing work to complete, but this mainly relates to the installation of a 600 mm high layer of 50 mm equine mesh around the base of the entire perimeter fence to help prevent future feral pig infiltrations. That should help to achieve elimination of all remaining feral ungulates within the Reserve and might also have the added benefit of excluding hare infiltrations.

The Gama Foundation has been funding most of the fencing work around the perimeter of Omahu Reserve and their support has been invaluable. This fence is not just as simple as putting a stock fence up. It requires a lot more attention to detail to act as an effective exclusion fence for feral ungulates. Performance monitoring of completed sections of the fence using trail and Wi-Fi cameras has been particularly useful.

We have been continuing a control program for feral pigs and deer in parallel with the fencing work and this has helped to suppress populations significantly. There is now evidence of the understory starting to recover in areas of the bush that had been adversely affected by larger populations of the feral ungulates.

Similar work is being undertaken by CCC in Otahuna Reserve to the north of Omahu and we have formed a strong collaborative approach on exclusion fencing and control measures. There is some further fencing work to do within Otahuna and once complete, CCC will manage pest control contractors to undertake some systematic culling of both Omahu and Otahuna Reserves. We will then use monitoring equipment to check the effectiveness of this work and deal with any residual feral ungulates as appropriate.

The perimeter fence has created a new maintenance workload. Ground vegetation adjacent to the base of the perimeter fence will need to be suppressed on a regular basis to prevent damage to the fence and to allow easy inspection of fence integrity. Ian Johnston and other volunteers have been busy spraying adjacent to the base of the fence ready for installation of the 50 mm mesh. The new fences are all placed on profiled benches which allow easy foot access for maintenance and inspection of vegetation growth and water channels that cross the fence.

There is evidence in many other parts of New Zealand that feral ungulate populations have been rising. This creates more pressure on areas of native biodiversity and can also adversely affect the carbon sink benefits from the affected areas of vegetation. DOC monitoring indicates feral goats, pigs and deer now roam 82% of the conservation estate, up from 63% in 2013.

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The impressive new deer fence at Omahu

Closer to home, some landowners seem happy to have ‘a few deer’ on their properties, not realizing the adverse effect this can have on native biodiversity. Productive hinds generally produce one fawn a year, so it can take a while for the population to grow. Feral pigs on the other hand generally produce 2 litters a year and litters can vary in size from 3 to 12, so the potential for rapid population growth is significant.

It's difficult to monetise the damage caused by these feral ungulates and demonstrate monetary benefits for exclusion fencing, but there are many extrinsic benefits. In the case of Omahu's remnant podocarp forest and regeneration, it now has a layer of protection that should allow biodiversity values to be enhanced so they can be nurtured and enjoyed by present and future generations.

Graham Corbishley

Omahu Predator Control

A recent grant from Pest Free Banks Peninsula will enable our network to further expand, both within the 80 ha Omahu Bush Reserve and into the adjacent grazing block. An area of native bush of approximately 30ha is regenerating under a gorse canopy at the lower end of this block. Many of the trees have broken through the gorse canopy. Between Omahu and Otahuna Reserves and an adjacent private property, there is a substantial block of native bush. Significant bird activity has been observed in the area. An additional 72 traps and bait stations are in the process of being purchased, constructed (the team are again building the DOC 200 traps) and installed. Twelve of the new AT220 auto-resetting possum and rat traps will be deployed

at the lower boundary of the Reserve where we get significant possum re-invasion.

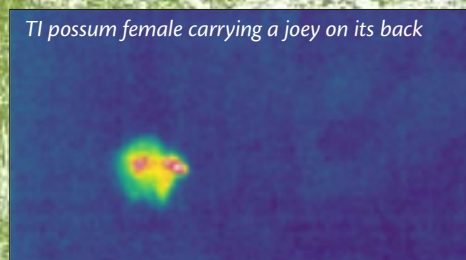
We were also fortunate to receive a very generous member donation which enabled us to improve our knowledge and understanding of invasive predators within the Reserve. The funds allowed us to purchase three passive infra-red (PIR) trail cameras and three Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) automated lure dispensers. Our aim was to use the remote PIR cameras and ZIP auto lures to detect and monitor multiple species of invasive predators in parallel to more traditional monitoring efforts (chew cards and tracking tunnels). We also developed an informal partnership with the Cacophony Project, a Christchurch-based initiative involving a mix of technical innovation and conservation activities. Cacophony allowed us the use of three of their Thermal Imaging (TI) cameras, which use artificial intelligence and machine learning to interpret images of invasive predators via the TI camera platform. Our monitoring protocol involved creating three monitoring stations that included a PIR & TI camera plus a ZIP auto lure. These monitoring stations were deployed in groups of three across already established monitoring lines, each ‘deployment’ being established for a 7-day period. We completed four deployments in October, and extensive footage was obtained. This information is now being interpreted and will form part of our baseline for future monitoring efforts. We are already planning to utilise our new equipment and protocols to enhance our feral cat monitoring and to observe the effectiveness of new and existing trap technology.

Greg Gimblett & Richard Mallet

Photos next page...



Monitoring predators in OMAHU



Omahu Work Party

The Omahu Bush work party meets on the first and third Friday of each month. An increase in volunteers helping spread the work load is very much appreciated by all.

The landscape scale restoration project, Te Kākahu Kahukura, committed to planting 2000 tōtara trees per annum on the southern Port Hills and has included Omahu Bush as one of its sites. We planted 100 this year and hope to do the same next year.

The track from the Gibraltar car park has been upgraded with steps on the steeper grades and many buckets of surface fill now cover the muddy patches and fill in the steps. Sections of the old redundant fences along Prendergast Track have been removed.

A rough cut of the track through the gorse by the stone wall has been made but there is a lot of finishing work to go.

The main tracks have dried out enough to allow machinery to work again and fence line spraying to continue. The Kubota is back in action again after major transmission repairs.

Ian Johnston



A quick break from working on the track to the old stone wall at Omahu

Tom Smith



Our condolences to the family of Tom Smith. Tom passed away on the 15 July 2021, aged 81.

Tom was a volunteer for over 10 years in all the SRS work party groups, although mainly for Omahu and the Eastenders, until early 2020 when the hills finally got too steep. He was one of the most regular members, always first to the car pool or on site. Tom was happiest knee deep in old man gorse, often out of sight altogether, and always let everyone know when it was time for a tea break.

Thanks Tom.



Carbon Credits

The Society is currently working on an application to register our reserves' regenerating bush and new plantings onto the NZ Emissions Trading Scheme. We see this an opportunity to generate an additional source of income which can be used to fund essential work such as weed control, predator and pest control, fencing and planting. The ETS criteria for eligible forest includes trees planted or established after 1990, potential to grow over 5m in height, potential to reach over 30% tree canopy and a minimum forest area of 1ha. Pre-1990 bush is not eligible for registration.

John Jameson Lookout

We are pleased to advise that our Lotteries Environment and Heritage Fund application was successful. This means that this project is now fully funded. Work is now underway on the planning and contract documents, with construction expected to start in the first quarter of 2022.

Our objective is to create a safe and accessible area for the community to enjoy the iconic view over the Harbour and learn about the area's cultural and natural heritage. We have been working closely with Ngāti Wheke of Rāpaki to incorporate the history and stories of mana whenua through the installation of a pou whenua. The area will also provide a gateway into Ohinetahi Reserve and the walking tracks on offer.

The view from the lookout above Ohinetahi Reserve encompasses the entire harbour basin. It is proposed to name the lookout after John Jameson who founded the Summit Road Society in 1948 and dedicated his life towards preserving the open spaces on the Port Hills for all to enjoy.

Our sincere thanks to landscape architects, Graham Densem and Nic Kaye, and engineering firm, Davie Lovell-Smith, for their work on this project.

Marie Gray



Playing in the stream at Orton Bradley Park

Kids Talk

We went for a trip to Orton Bradley Park. We went for a walk in the bush and had a picnic. We saw some kawakawa. We also saw fantails, kererū, sheep and butterflies. It was really fun playing in the stream. We brought our bikes and we went for a bike ride. We also played in the playground. My favourite part was the bike ride and eating hot chips at the café.

Hine-Te-Kawa Aupouri-Coleman (age 5)



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<https://givealittle.co.nz/org/summit-road-society>

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Omahu Bush work party	Ian Johnston	332 8319
Linda Woods Reserve WP	Graeme Paltridge	384 3592

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. We need and welcome contributions to our work through memberships, donations and corporate sponsorships, bequests, participation in work parties (non-members welcome—but why not join us as well!!)

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram - **Summit Road Society & Predator Free Port Hills** for regular updates

Plant a Tree but plan it first

Save the World, Plant a Tree, so they say. Sounds simple but the reality is a bit more complex, particularly when the goal is to restore native habitat on the Port Hills. The Summit Road Society has been planting trees on the Port Hills since it was founded in 1948. The types of trees planted in that time have changed, and one would be tempted to think it is now a well-oiled and simple process. In fact, as the years have gone on and our knowledge has increased, it has become a very complex task.

The Society's Management Report for the 150 hectare Ohinetahi Reserve was developed in conjunction with botanist, Hugh Wilson, who is the kaitiaki of Hinewai Reserve on Banks Peninsula. The general thrust is to aim for natural regeneration using gorse, bracken and broom cover to act as a nursery for native species. Large areas of the Reserve are seeing the fruits of this policy, with gorse and blackberry dying once natives grow through them. Since the 2017 fires, there has been a need to help the natural process by planting trees as well. Over 8000 trees have been planted by Ohinetahi volunteers. The emphasis has been on fast growing and fire-resistant natives but some podocarps have also been planted.

Members of the public have come on board to fund some of this planting and the Society is grateful for any donations. People who are not in a position to plant natives on their own land can leave a living legacy for others with donations towards planting. Ohinetahi is under a QEII Covenant which states 'The Owner may augment the existing bush by the planting of native tree and shrub species which are indigenous to the Port Hills Ecological District'. Most of the plants for the Ohinetahi Reserve are from the Department of Conservation's Motukarara Nursery. For Omahu Bush, the plants are largely sourced from Trees for Canterbury. The Wai-Ora Nursery is growing the plants for Linda Woods Reserve as part of the Jobs for Nature Project. All three nurseries eco-source their plants.

As a member of the Ohinetahi work party, I took the opportunity to visit the Motukarara Nursery to learn more about the eco-sourcing process. Displays at the Nursery provide tips on what to plant and where to plant them. Examples are given of people who have planted on their own land and they all reiterate that planning before planting is the most crucial step.

The Motukarara Nursery sources seeds and cuttings from 20 sites throughout Canterbury and 200 different species are grown there.

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The Nursery has become a victim of its success and, despite raising 160,000 plants a year, the demand far exceeds the supply. They cannot take any further orders for 2022 and there are no retail sales. The Nursery estimates they could increase capacity by up to four times and still not meet demand, such is the interest in planting natives. Wai-ora Forest Landscapes and Trees for Canterbury are also experiencing unprecedented demand.

This interest is great news for groups such as the Summit Road Society who are wanting to restore native habitat. The Society is always on the lookout for fit volunteers who can help the Tuesday group in Ohinetahi, the Friday Group in Omahu, the Eastenders Group and a new group just formed for the Linda Woods Reserve.

New volunteers can tap the wealth of knowledge of existing group members. For instance, **Helen Hills** in the Ohinetahi group has eco-sourced seed from the Reserve and raised plants herself which have been planted out by volunteers in the last few months. The process takes at least a year from seed or cutting gathering to planting. Knowledge of the plants in the area is essential. As an example, *Pittsoporum crassifolium* (karo) is a native New Zealand plant but only grows naturally in the North Island. It has been a popular plant in Canterbury gardens and has spread on to the Port Hills but is not native to the area.

The advantages of eco-sourced plants include—

-  Seed from the area of planting will be adapted to the local environment.
-  It will ensure that the unique biodiversity of the area will be maintained.
-  It prevents inappropriate planting of the wrong species for the area.

In addition to Ohinetahi, there is of course the Society's largest current planting project in Avoca Valley. Volunteers will be required to work on a regular basis in this area.

In Omahu Bush, the emphasis is currently on finishing a deer fence so deer and pigs can be eradicated from the Reserve. This will protect this prime area of native forest which is home to some of the largest and oldest trees on the Port Hills.

In summary, planting is not a simple process. The first and most important step is planning. Planting then becomes the second step along with a need for ongoing care. Trees are like children. They need nurturing and do not tolerate being planted and left to their own devices. The most important step is to plant the right tree in the right place and then care for it appropriately.

Groups such as the Society are founts of knowledge on what's required and are happy to share this knowledge. Contact numbers for the three volunteer groups are included in the Newsletter. Donations of money from those who can't spare their time for hands-on work are used prudently and wisely to ensure future generations will have the Society's Reserves to treasure.

Murray Smith

Ohinetahi Work Party Member



Volunteer Helen Hills planting a tree which she has raised from seed eco-sourced on the Port Hills.

Banks Peninsula Walking Festival

John Marsh and I led a walk to Avoca Valley as part of the Banks Peninsula Walking Festival. The mist was low on the Port Hills that day but we forged ahead. We met at the carpark beside Witch Hill Reserve and followed Rapaki Track down into Linda Woods Reserve. We spent a few hours exploring the length of the valley—the new plantings along the stream, the old remnant vegetation on the rocky bluffs, the proposed planting areas in 2022 and the 'tyre graveyard'—a leftover from night time antics before the Summit Road was closed. The fog was a special experience. One minute it would lift and we would have amazing views of the Valley. The next minute it would descend and we were in the mists. Thank you to John Marsh for sharing his detailed knowledge of Avoca Valley and to Melanie Coker and Paul Loughton for assisting as marshals.

Unfortunately, our Kids' Adventure around Sugarloaf was cancelled due to poor weather. We will try again next year.

Marie Gray



Exploring Avoca Valley

LINDA WOODS RESERVE

The main focus this year has been the restoration of Avoca Valley. Volunteers planted 2600 trees on the lower slopes of the Valley earlier in the year. In July, we were delighted to receive \$650,000 in Jobs for Nature funding to restore a lowland podocarp forest to the Valley.

Despite the short time frames, issues with heavy rain over winter and then the lockdown, 6400 plants and trees were planted along the stream in Linda Woods Reserve and the neighbouring property. The Jobs for Nature project includes a collaboration with our neighbour to create a 1ha ecological corridor to link Linda Woods Reserve and Christchurch City Council reserve Montgomery Spur. The Avoca Valley community planted 360 plants, with the balance planted by Wai-ora staff.

We are now turning our attention to maintenance. The plants are looking very healthy, thanks to the wet winter. The grass and weeds have also come away so volunteers and contractors have been releasing the plants and mulching the area ready for the long dry summer.

A digger has tidied up the old 4WD farm tracks to ensure safe access for fencing and the planting programme next year. Wai-ora contractors have also been busy installing 3.5km of fencing to exclude stock from the restoration areas. We are on track to plant 30,000 plants and trees next winter.

We are also continuing our planning for the track network, including linking tracks with adjacent reserves. We held a workshop with Society members in early August to seek their feedback on the draft management plan.

The rock remediation for Horotane Valley will be completed by the end of the year and we are working on the first tranche of signage for the Reserve.

Thank you to John Marsh for his dedication to this project and to the numerous volunteers who turned up for planting and maintenance days.

Thank you as well to the funders who helped make this project a reality—Department of Conservation (Jobs for Nature), Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, Million Metre Streams, Trees That Count, the Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust and the many private individuals and businesses who have contributed.

And we can't forget the hardworking Eastenders who have been busy grubbing nassella tussock and undertaking planting and weed control in Avoca Valley.

We have recently established a new dedicated volunteer work party for Linda Woods Reserve. John Marsh and Graeme Paltridge have kindly agreed to co-lead this group. It meets fortnightly on a Wednesday morning. Tasks include weed control, track maintenance, planting and general reserve maintenance.

If you are keen to join, please contact Graeme Paltridge at graeme_sue@slingshot.co.nz

Marie Gray & Bill Woods



Public weeding day at Avoca Valley



The inaugural Linda Woods Reserve work party

Predator Free Port Hills

We now have 1100 households signed up to our programme. If you know anyone trapping on the Port Hills, please encourage them to sign up to our website:

www.predatorfreeporthills.org.nz

This helps us identify where our trappers are and importantly where the gaps are. Don't forget to map your traps and log your catches too. Good reporting helps us to build a picture of trapping across the Port Hills and detect hotspots and target areas.

With the challenges of Covid-19, Predator Free Port Hills has shifted to focusing on small local outdoor events, Zoom workshops and social media campaigns. Recent events include zoom trapping workshops and trap building sessions in Cass Bay, Diamond Harbour and Cracroft.

We have also been working closely with a number of schools. Christ's College spent a day helping us to prepare materials for community trap-building days in the New Year.

In other exciting news, Predator Free Port Hills received first place in the 2021 Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Awards! Thank you very much to the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board for this recognition and to The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust for their generous sponsorship. The \$3000 prize money will be used to support our kids' education programme. It is the children of today who will carry the Predator Free vision into the future.

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Trap building in Cass Bay

We received an amazing taonga, Te Waka o Aoraki, for first place. It is now at the Mt Pleasant Community Centre in the Front Room Cafe. The Centre has been a great friend to Predator Free Port Hills and we have a stall at the Mt Pleasant Farmers' Market on the second Saturday of each month. The taonga will be on display until about September 2022.

On 1 November, we launched our Sign Up Your Neighbour campaign on social media. This will be a key focus for the summer months. In the New Year, we will also get started with a series of fun competitions.

Please follow our Predator Free Port Hills Facebook page for regular updates. A huge thank you to our volunteer coordinators and backyard trappers who make the project such a success.

Marie Gray & Jeremy Agar



Jeremy Agar with the Conservation Award taonga Te Waka o Aoraki

Pest Free Banks Peninsula

The Summit Road Society is a partner in Pest Free Banks Peninsula, an ambitious and aspirational programme to eradicate pests and predators from Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills by 2050.

Areas of work include the elimination programmes on Kaitōrete and the Extended Wildside, the feral goat eradication project, intensive predator control on the Southern Port Hills (including Omaha and Ohinetahi) and our community and backyard trapping programme, Predator Free Port Hills.

Thanks to significant central and local government funding, Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust have been able to employ dedicated Pest Free Banks Peninsula staff for the Kaitōrete and the Extended Wildside projects. The team have been hard at work over the last few months, cutting over 40 kilometres of tracks through Misty Peaks Reserve and Hinewai, refining the operational plans and setting up a community trapping programme at Fisherman's Point and Taumutu Marae, a critical area for re-invasion of Kaitōrete.

As predator control efforts on the Peninsula ramp up, Predator Free Port Hills will provide an important buffer zone between the Peninsula and the city.

Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust

At the September meeting, Trust Chairman John Goodrich advised that he and his wife, Liz, were planning to relocate to Whanganui at the end of the year. Those of us who have worked alongside John will miss his many years of passion and enthusiasm for both Summit Road Society and Trust affairs. In November, the Trustees held an informal morning tea at The Sign of the Takahe to thank John and wish him well in his 'retirement'. John will continue as a Trustee for the foreseeable future, with meetings by Zoom.

Christchurch is indeed fortunate to have the Summit Road and the recreational lungs of the Port Hills on its doorstep. When I joined the Society Board as its Treasurer in 1986, there was pressure from 'developers' to commercialize the Port Hills and 'farm' houses. It became obvious that, if the Society wanted to protect the open spaces, it would need to buy Port Hills land as opportunities arose. The Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust was established with the objectives of raising money for Society land acquisition and furthering the work of the Society in the on-going maintenance of tracks and other facilities. The inaugural Trustees were John Jameson, Maurice McGregor, Gordon Kirk, Graham Densem and Paul Loughton.

The Society has come a long way since then. Today the Society owns, and its volunteers look after, 530 hectares, comprising Ohinetahi, Omaha, Gibraltar and Linda Woods Reserves, made possible through generous gifts, donations and legacies. East of Dyers Pass, the higher north facing slopes are now largely in public or quasi-public ownership but to the west, many hectares remain at risk.

The Trust needs money in the bank to be able to move swiftly when the possibility of land purchase occurs or urgent maintenance work is required. Can you assist us with a donation, pledge or a legacy? If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me on 027-868-8478. The Trust is a registered charity (Registration number CC27183). Subject to tax rules, donations to the Trust qualify for a 33% tax rebate. Donations and legacies can be tagged for the specific purpose of land acquisition, or for the maintenance of the Society's reserves and other facilities.

Recently the Trust has assisted with contributions towards dangerous rock remediation work in Linda Woods Reserve, the Avoca Valley planting and the Society's planned John Jameson Lookout.

Paul Loughton

Treasurer, Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust



Trustees Marie Gray, Jeremy Agar, Paul Tebbutt, John Goodrich and Paul Loughton at the Sign of the Takahe



The many faces of

Ohinetahi Reserve

MURRAY SMITH



MURRAY SMITH



NVAITJUS NOI



JON SULLIVAN

JON SULLIVAN