



22nd February Earthquake

We have all been affected by Christchurch's recent earthquake and for many of us the priority has been to try to return our lives to as much normality as possible. Some members have had to leave their homes, and many will be living in damaged property. I hope that you and your family are safe and well. The Society's activities will be severely curtailed for some months. However, once more work has been done on the safety of Port Hills parks and reserves and their tracks, the Society and its volunteers will be needed more than ever. I imagine that renewing

your membership of the Society has not been a priority. However, we are determined to get back to normal as soon as possible, and your continued support will help this. Invoices are enclosed for those members whose subscriptions are due.



(Captain Thomas Track)



(Barnett Park) (Courtesy of Nick Singleton)

From the Secretary

As many of you aware, Liz and I have been away from New Zealand for almost two years. We spent just over a year in the U.K. catching up with family and friends, and then six months touring Europe. I would like to thank Jeff Long for the sterling work he did while I was away, and to the Board for welcoming me back as Secretary. For anyone who needs to get in touch with me, my home office is now fully operational. It is impossible to be in Western Europe without being aware of the rich and long heritage. With regard to buildings, this is of course a current issue in the aftermath of the earthquake. However, heritage, particularly British, also encompasses the huge network of public footpaths, byways and bridle paths. It struck me quite forcibly, that this heritage is being created in and around our Port Hills. I feel justifiably proud to live in a place where the local councils actively pursue public access to the hills, and to be associated with a Society that has been instrumental in helping to bring this about.

(John Goodrich)



a passion for the Port Hills

A Society Milestone

On March 6th, an important milestone for the Society was reached. John Jameson celebrated his 90th birthday. John, Harry Ell's grandson, founded the Society in 1948, and is still active in its affairs. At his birthday 'bash' Mike White, a former President, gave a short speech celebrating the occasion:

“John has been so closely associated with the Summit Road Society over the 63 years of its existence that it is almost part of his physical and spiritual being. It and the Port Hills have been burnt into his soul as it were. It was he who initiated the idea of such a society and is its founding father. For over two thirds of his life he has lived and breathed the Summit Road Society as well as being involved with all his other interests and family. And even now he is still involved in its administration and offers wise counsel to it. John of course was inspired by his energetic and visionary grandfather, Harry Ell, who at the beginning of last century, set about opening up the Port Hills for recreation, initiated the building of the Summit Road itself, and sought to protect its natural environment by creating scenic reserves.

It has been said, nations are built through institutions and institutions are the building blocks of cities. There is some truth in that. The Summit Road Society founded by John is an institution which in many ways has helped to develop Christchurch's culture and character. It hasn't been an institution concerned with bricks and mortar or relating to professional or business organisations. But what it has done is helped the citizens of Christchurch to connect with the wonders of the Port Hills and to enjoy them for recreation, spiritual solace and for their wonderful natural biodiversity. It is said that Harry Ell was ahead of his time. Well, by 1948 his time had come and John had the vision to pick up the challenge that his grandfather left behind and to run with it.”

Ohinetahi Bush Reserve

The past 12 months have been as busy as ever at Ohinetahi. Our regulars have been joined at times by number of young enthusiasts while waiting for regular jobs. The routine of track maintenance, weed control and animal pest control has been ongoing. The plantings around the Governors Bay entrance (Gordon's Garden) are thriving. Unlike the September earthquake, the reserve does not seem to have suffered any damage from the 22nd February one. However, until we have been able to have a more detailed survey, we advise that Society members and the public should not use the tracks

Omahu Bush Update

The main work done on Omahu over the past three months has been the control of gorse in the grazing area around Gibraltar Rock in order to keep this area visibly clear. Stalwarts, complete with saws, loppers and herbicide gathered every fortnight to tackle some huge bushes near the Summit Road. All tracks have been mowed and a small re-alignment of the track near the car park has been completed. Some maintenance has been done on the track at the bottom, just uphill from the creek. Some pigs and deer have been seen and we have had some success controlling these pests. Once again, we advise that Society members and the public should not use the tracks until we are satisfied that they are safe.