



### An active Society

**I**t has been very rewarding to have received such a good response from members, families and friends to the Outings we have run this year. Also to our request for help in staffing our display at the National Council of Women's exhibition 'Celebrating the Rural Port Hills as Glimpsed from Urban Places'. Thank you. The Committee has tried to broaden the range of our activities from former years, and the result has been greater personal contact with our growing number of members. I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet some of you during the course of the year's activities.

In this Newsletter you will see we are asking for your continued active support in a number of ways, viz:

- ▶ completing a questionnaire on the Outings programme, to help with our planning for next year (see enclosed form)
- ▶ volunteering for a weekend roster at the Victoria Park Information Centre;
- ▶ joining the newly-formed Saturday afternoon work party;
- ▶ making a donation towards the cost of our case in the Environment Court opposing the rezoning of Montgomery Spur for residential development (appeal letter enclosed)

There are still a few weeks to the end of 2001 but I would like to extend Christmas Greetings to you and your families, and wish you a happy holiday and prosperous New Year.

Maurice McGregor  
President



Paul Devlin and some very parched trampers take a well deserved break on the Kahukura Track below Castle Rock, on the very hot March 2001 Outing.

### Editorial

sometimes as the next wave of 'trouble' sweeps over the Society one is tempted to wonder if it perhaps may have been better had Harry Ell never initiated the idea of the Summit Road and its public reserves and access. Maybe it would have been better for the Port Hills to have turned out like Victoria Peak in Hong Kong? There the mansions of the wealthy occupy the high hilltops, looking down on the city below. There are only small reserves, and a famed cable car up to the highest point. The best walking is along utilitarian water catchment conduits. Maybe it would have been OK to have houses all over the Port Hills?

I don't really think so. I lived 5 years in Hong Kong, in a middle class 'ghetto' amongst the wealthy, halfway up the hill. We were surrounded by mansions swathed in bauhinia and barbed wire, to ensure people were kept out. The hills offered great housing sites, but their development exclusively for private purposes precluded other potential public uses of the hills and were a particularly single-minded approach to the problem of housing. Public uses are equally important as housing in maintaining a healthy and equitable city in the long term. Housing on the skyline removes forever the key component of natural character, or what Chinese geomancy (Fung Shui) calls 'breaking the back of the dragon'. Which is 'fung shui talk' for the need to show respect rather than arrogance. Also, too-complete a concentration on private land, to the exclusion of public access, speaks of a city not resolute in its community spirit.

In the case of the Port Hills, keeping the skyline natural is important to the character of Christchurch City, the Lyttelton Harbour basin and the plains of Selwyn District. I think it was Gordon Ogilvie who commented that Christchurch would be a spectacularly boring city without that wonderful wild, brooding 'dragon' of the Hills slumbering to the south. Not to mention the southerlies that would blast in. We should rejoice in the gift our own Christchurch 'taniwha' offers.

But besides the skyline, the shape and covering of the Port Hills also are important to Christchurch. The radiating pattern of spurs between Godley Head and Gebbies Pass remind us of the lava flows of the former Lyttelton volcano, like the roots of some truncated Mount Egmont or Fujiyama. The grassland covering, green in winter, fawn in summer, has a unique beauty found only in the particular climate, soil and latitude of Christchurch. To see the Hills brown and dry against a blue summer sky with billowing white clouds, is to understand the soul of the place in which we live. Equally to understand it as the black winter squalls sweep along the tops. To mask or change the natural patterns unduly is to devalue the place we where live, and thus our lives.

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There is something critical in retaining the magic of the Port Hills. In having the upper levels not diluted with even occasional houses or low density development. Just pure, stark natural character—outcrops, ridges, tussock, forest, strong curves and patterns. These counterbalance the city. Retaining such strengths would speak of a community with the restraint to maintain magic for its citizens, as well as the necessary drains, wires and asphalt. Who has not been disappointed at the profusion of lights on the upper Tai Tapu Hills in the last 3–5 years? (If you haven't been out there at night lately take a drive to Tai Tapu, preferably with a loved one, and see for yourself). Or the creep of houses up the spurs on the Lyttelton side. In my opinion the upper Hills should remain utterly natural in perpetuity—not just isolated token bits of natural but the whole swathe. Some may call it recreation opportunity, habitat, visual protection or magic. The end is the same. A healthy community for the long term.

There still are places on the Hills where further development will not significantly devalue the natural character. We have to acknowledge that Hills suburbs such as Cashmere also have a strong character. It is not yet necessary to be totally anti-development. But there are limits. Generally it is about the upper half of the hills, visually, that need to appear natural if that character is to survive. Any less and the natural will seem dominated by the urban. Nor should the cut off be a straight contour line, like some aircraft carrier. Perhaps in some cases the cut off may rise higher, as it already does on the Cashmere and Mount Pleasant spurs. But in compensation it should be correspondingly lower on other spurs and valleys, to keep the visual 'average' about half. Any more and the natural character of the Port Hills will be swamped by the urban.



**Summit Road Society (Inc)**  
PO Box 583, Christchurch

President	Maurice McGregor	332 0597
Vice-President	Gordon Kirk	332 7134
Treasurer	Paul Loughton	322 7082
Administrator	Carol Haars	385 2840
Co-ordinator	Graham Densem	348 9252
Committee	Graham Dunbar	358 8278
	Tui Elliot	329 9018
	Barry Gerard	326 5105
	Anne Kennedy	337 0364
Work Parties		
Eastenders	John Willocks	384 3252
Kiwi Gang	Anne Henderson	352 8058
Ohinetahi	Gordon Kirk	3327134

We are a voluntary society promoting enhancement, preservation and protection of the nature, beauty and character of the hills of Banks Peninsula, for people's enjoyment.

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.

How should such a pattern be equitably distributed between property owners? Who should choose who will have the privilege of profiting from development of their land and who denied it? Here lies the eternal collision course of a social democracy. I offer no profound answer. But we do have to find a way. Without it the natural character of the Hills will be lost. Partly, the answer lies in spending public money to purchase public reserves, as in the City Council's Port Hills acquisition strategy. But this is not the whole answer. There should continue also to be a place for the efficiencies of private land ownership, under covenant perhaps, on the Hills. Like it or not the answer lies in the political process, through councils, the Resource Management Act, and through the Summit Road Protection Authority and its Act. The Society, on your behalf, continues to be involved in these processes. But we encounter scant understanding of the long term when undertaking these proceedings on your behalf. And not enough supporters.

Our President was criticised earlier in the year for voicing opposition to a helicopter tourist operation beside the Summit Road, at the top of the Bridle Path. The proposers wished to run flights from a pad in a public reserve. Our President having voiced an opinion, the proposers challenged the Society's right to interfere with their making of a living. Which raises another interesting question—how far should publicly funded and maintained facilities be used for generating private profits? After all, without the labours of Harry Ell and the Society, and of the Councils and Department of Conservation, there would be no Summit Road, and no chain of public reserves for helicopter tourists to want to enjoy on the Hills. Ironic that someone should see only the immediate opportunity and not the stewardship required to maintain it in perpetuity. Reassuring that 100 years of past vision have maintained the magic of the Hills for people to still enjoy today.

On balance, I am glad Harry Ell and John Jameson did bother about the future. Did, along with others, bother to expend copious amounts of their time—indeed in Harry Ell's case to consume his life—in working for a vision of the Hills as a natural asset for the public to enjoy in perpetuity. The Port Hills are central to the character of Christchurch. The Society must continue its quest amidst increasing pressures for development and change. These things don't just happen. It is up to us today to continue bothering about tomorrow. Particularly as the next wave of 'trouble' turns up. Encourage your friends to join and support the Society.

Graham Densem  
Editor

## Obituary

Margaret Jameson

Margaret Jameson, the wife of the Society's founder John Jameson, died at home in July. She and John met when they were both at the Air Force base at Whenuapai and married a few years after the end of the War. In 1949 they came to live at 105 Bishop Street Christchurch where they raised their three children Geoffrey, Paula and Peter. Margaret, like John, had a love of the outdoors and the family can remember having picnics on the Port Hills. In the last few years Margaret was not well enough to go far from home but she made sure that she had a game of bridge two or three times a week. Members of the Summit Road Society's committee over the years have appreciated the friendly way Margaret fielded Society's phone messages on John's behalf. Last month the family scattered her ashes on a farm in North Canterbury.

Maurice McGregor

## From the Port Hills Rangers

the team from the Port Hills Ranger Service has spent a busy winter on restoration work following the storm of October 2000. As most will be aware we suffered severe damage to many of our exotic tree plantings. Victoria Park and Bowenvale Reserve were the most severely affected areas with large individual trees being toppled and also whole sections of plantations.

The *P. radiata* forest in Bowenvale was completely destroyed and had to be logged. At this stage we have completed the extraction of the lower section of plantation and the site has been re-



Victoria Park. Clean up of the old trees that succumbed to the October 2000 storm.

planted with native species. The upper area of plantation is yet to be removed and the extent of the removal will depend on the market price. This area will also be planted back into natives. Other areas affected to a lesser degree were the upper parts of Victoria Park. Again we have cleared these sites and replanted where appropriate. There is still substantial work to do on tidying up damaged areas but much of this will now have to be sidelined until time and resources allow us to continue.

Remarkably, we have suffered very little damage to our tracks this winter, due in main to regular inspections and water channel work along the crater rim walkway and the other major routes. Perhaps from the dry winter also.

Our normal work of plant and animal pest control, education, fence maintenance and ecological monitoring has steadily continued. There have been several new initiatives in track development however. A new mountain bike track below Dyers Pass has been

started and we now are waiting on McVicars to complete their logging. Track construction will continue this summer around from the Kiwi to Marley's Hill, over the top and linking in with Worsley's Track. Ranger Nick Singleton has been working with the Eastenders on changes to the end of the Captain Thomas Walkway, to improve the connection to Summer. We look forward to that project also this summer. We have also been involved with the new accessible track on Mt Vernon. Lamar Track was opened at the end of September and provides new oppor-

tunities for those with difficulties accessing usual walking tracks on the hills. The Port Hills Visitor Centre continues to be redeveloped both inside and out. New displays on pest management are imminent and brochures are currently being developed for recreation facilities.

The brochures will include information on the Summit Road

Society. It's great to be working with a common approach on this sort of thing.

Two new strategies specific to the Port Hills have been started by the Parks and Waterways Unit. The first is an interpretation strategy. This focuses on where we want to head with things like information panels, visitor centres, maps, and brochures and on site interpretation for the Port Hills. The strategy will drive our programme of developing these facilities and where they should be located and what they should look like. We are working closely with all other stakeholders on the hills, including the Summit Road Society. The second is a recreation strategy. Again this will look at the future of recreation on the Port Hills generally, focusing firstly at what we have now and where we will proceed in the near future. We then will develop a long-term vision as to how and where we may provide facilities on the hills over perhaps the next 40 years. This strategy will also be dependent on input from

all stakeholders and I look forward to discussing it with Society members.

There have also been some large developments within our own organisation. The Parks Unit, of which the park rangers form one of many teams, has had some major restructure work since the last newsletter. One of the main changes is our amalgamation with the Waterways Unit and the change to many of the managerial positions. The key positional change for us is the appointment of Kay Holder as Regional Parks Team Manager. She will coordinate the Ranger Services in Plains, Coastal and Port Hills areas of the City. This is a new role as previously we came under the umbrella of several different teams. Now that we have our own dedicated section and Team Leader we hope to have a clearer focus and improved delivery of our services. Kay brings some great skills, especially in the area of advocacy and community participation, and is a strong supporter of the Summit Road Society and its relationship with the Park Ranger Service.

Once again, thank you for the assistance you provide for us on the Port Hills. The physical work that you carry out on our tracks and facilities is vital to their successful management and the support in planning and long term visioning has been equally important.

The ranger team on the hills is looking forward to another busy productive summer with as little smoke on the horizon as possible! I hope to see most of you at the end of year barbeque in Victoria Park on November 25th. I can discuss some of the projects and developments that are underway in more detail then.

See you on the tracks,  
Paul Devlin  
Head Ranger Port Hills Regional Area

## And from Kay Holder

Regional Parks Team Manager,  
Parks & Waterways Unit,  
Christchurch City Council

as paul devlin mentioned, the Council is considering doing some long-term



planning for its land on the Port Hills and also is suggesting the development of a recreation strategy. We are hoping to contact the Society soon to gauge interest in taking a more holistic approach to the use of publicly accessible land on the hills. This could look at who provides tracks and facilities, what standard they are, how they fit in with other pertinent values such as ecological, heritage, landscape and cultural aspects. The information should contribute to better overall management of the Port Hills and could guide development, or non development, of new recreation facilities. The Society's involvement in developing such a strategy is expected to be central. It is hard to imagine producing it without your input.

Another project that would be good to work on with the Society is compiling an updated map-based leaflet on the Port Hills. This would provide brief general information and the whereabouts of visitor facilities—tracks, toilets, information centres and the like—and would list sources of more detailed information, ie Gordon Ogilvie's excellent book *Enjoying the Port Hills*, the rangers and the Society. Putting the information on a website to make it more accessible to visitors, schools, residents and other users is also an option.

On the topic of information and education, the council has been successful in getting Ministry of Education funding to employ teachers to work in a 'Learning

Experiences Outside the Classroom' (LEOTC) programme. These teachers now work with our rangers to improve the environmental education offered on the hills. If you know of any school planning a visit to the hills, let them know that they can contact the rangers (332 9889) or Janice Beaumont (371 1298) for free assistance in helping make the most of their visit.

Congratulations to Gordon Kirk on his being awarded the Queens Service Medal. It's a great recognition for the hours of work that he and other members of the society have energetically put into 'the hills'.

Kay Holder



Eastenders work party track-building at Castle Rock, October 2000.  
From left; Dave Richardson, Bill Le Gros and Ken Rossiter. Photo: Geoff Bendall.

## Ohinetahi Work Party

the success of the walkway connection from our Ohinetahi Reserve to Governors Bay has exceeded expectations. Not only is it used by numerous tramping groups but local residents also. They are regular users of the Titoki Track and beyond, and are better able to appreciate the whole Ohinetahi area as part of the exciting backdrop to Governors Bay. Although not yet fully bedded in, the Titoki Track has proved more than adequate for the many users.

The most important activity by the Ohinetahi work group has been the construction of 400 metres of Hurricane netting fence, to protect the bush segment of our new property and allow grazing of the tussock and grassland section. The fence line in the main was cleared by hand, through thick gorse up to 3 metres high in places. The work was expedited by the early work of Ben & Colin Faulkner in surveying and identifying our boundary pegs. Our neighbour Chris Valance has agreed to share the cost of 140 metres of the fence where our properties adjoin.

Thanks must go to the Ohinetahi work party members whose excellent efforts have meant a saving of more than \$2,000 to the Society.

Gordon Kirk

[Having visited the work in progress I can endorse Gordon's last comment. It is a steep site and genuinely hard yakka. Well done chaps! And well done Gordon, in seeing through the purchase and 'taming' of the new block. All Roamers salute you!—Ed]

## Call for Volunteers

Proposal to form a weekend hill work party—

A weekend work party has been organised by the Society and began operating on maintenance of Port Hills tracks in September. Its aim is to allow participation by those unable to join our weekday work parties. The Society's aim is to increase the input to hill work by enabling a wider range of members and friends to join in, out of regular work hours. Members and non-members are welcome and regular attendance is not essential.

Anyone interested please contact Bob Cawley on 326-6687

Weekend roster for Victoria Park Information Centre—

In cooperation with the Ranger Staff, the Society is establishing a roster of members willing to staff the Victoria Park Visitors Centre in the weekends. Two members are needed per day or half-day session.

This will give the opportunity to encourage public participation in Summit Road activities and affairs, and to publicise the Society. Training will be given by the Ranger staff and our Committee.

Please contact John Jameson, phone 366-8243.

## Resource Management Activities

The Resource Management Subcommittee has been involved in several activities over the year.

### Summit Road Protection Bill

early in the year the society mounted a major presentation to the Parliamentary Select Committee hearing on revision of this Bill. We advocated for a wider Protection Area, tighter definitions of and provisions for protection within the area, for views towards the Hills to be acknowledged as well as views from the Hills, and for DOC, Environment Canterbury and the tangata whenua to be represented on the Authority. Our vision was for an Act which paved the way towards the regional park structure which appears to be where the future for the Hills lies. We ruffled a few feathers in advocating a larger degree of change than the legislators had envisaged, but felt the time was right to raise wider issues as to the Port Hills futures.

The second reading of the Bill on 29 August indicated that some gains were made, but not the big ones we might have hoped for. The Advisory Committee structure has been widened, but not the Authority itself. Some details of the protection were improved, but not as widely as we would have hoped. The area of the Hills protected under the Act remains unchanged at the arbitrary 30m below the Summit Road and up to the Summit, which we believe is not enough to be effective in the long term. And it only protects that side of

the Port Hills where the Summit Road runs—mostly the Christchurch side, but occasionally Lyttelton.

Following are brief extracts from the Parliamentary Record of the Second Reading of the Bill in the House, on 29 August 2001:

Hon David Carter (part extract from):  
 ‘...At times the debate within the Select Committee was robust, and quite divergent views were discussed, but we managed to find a consensus point of view. I thank the many submitters, whose input has been valuable as we have deliberated on the Summit Road (Canterbury) Protection Bill. We had a large number of submissions that wanted to extend greatly the effect of

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” We commend the idea of the Port Hills becoming a regional park  
 —Hon Ruth Dyson

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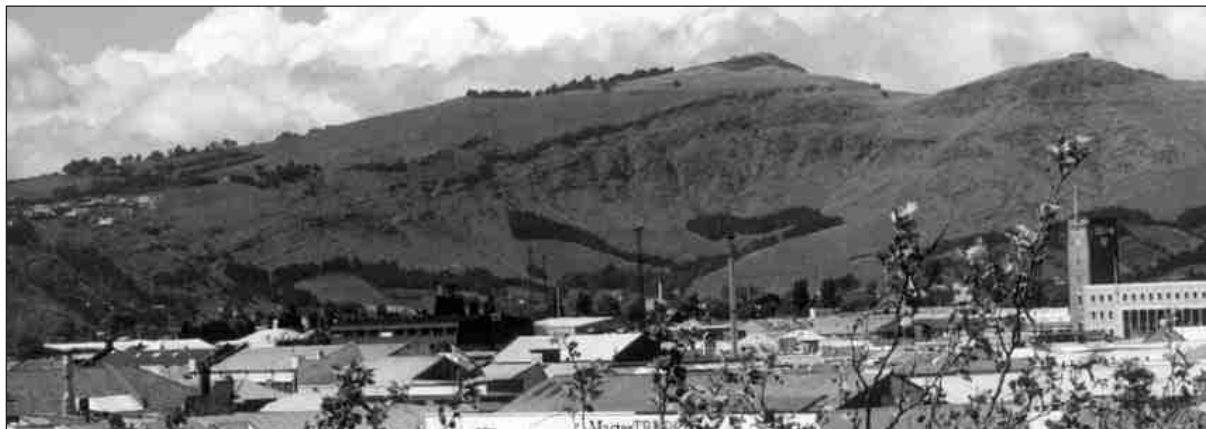
the legislation by seeking an alteration that would ensure that views from the City of Christchurch were protected, rather than the views from the Summit Road itself. The true aim of the submitters was to achieve a park-like designation over the whole of the Port Hills. Their wishes are noble, but I was certainly not prepared to accept any further erosion of private property rights in order to achieve regional park status. I was certainly concerned when Government members attempted to argue that significantly increasing the area affected by this legislation would not be to the detriment of private property owners. This is manifestly untrue.’

‘When this legislation was introduced I raised the idea of the Summit Road becoming a State Highway rather than being the responsibility of the three

constituent councils... I have researched this matter now at some length and can find no other road in New Zealand that is protected by its own Act of Parliament. The Act is there to protect what we see as a significant heritage structure, and something that is of very great tourism value. I am a regular user and observer of the traffic that uses this road, and over the years I have noticed a significant change in usage. A number of large buses full of overseas tourists are regularly using this particular roadway. The heavy weight of those vehicles is placing more demand on the road’s substructure and surface. The cost of that should not be paid simply by the ratepayers of the three constituent councils. Therefore I give notice today that I intend to promote a members bill to ensure that the Summit Road is designated as a State Highway so that costs can be shared more equitably.’

Hon Ruth Dyson (in part) ‘...We tried to ensure that we updated the definitions of the various facilities that receive protection under this legislation, to make them more in keeping with the definitions under the Resource Management Act. We did not go as far as some submitters would have liked us to go. The key area of debate focussed on a proposed amendment that, in the end, the select committee did not agree to. That amendment would have protected the views from the city to the Port Hills. Although that was my personal wish and, indeed, was the intention of the majority of the submitters, in the committee’s view it would not have been able to be enforced. Instead, we have gone for better protection in areas where such protection would be straightforward and enforceable, and would not restrict any progress that the majority of people who

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Port Hills Patterns. The lava flows of the Mt Pleasant spur. Viewed from downtown Christchurch. The trees on the ridgeline as they were before the October storm.



value the protection of the Port Hills would support.'

'Although that remained the only area of division, and we were not able to reflect that intention in the legislation, in our commentary we commend the idea of the Port Hills becoming a regional park. Indeed the Summit Road Protection Authority gave a commitment to the select committee to facilitate further discussion on this matter between the three local authorities.'

Space does not permit extracts from other presentations by Alec Neill (NZ National), Gerrard Eckhoff (Act NZ), Rod Donald (Co-Leader - Green) and Clayton Cosgrove (NZ Labour), which all give interesting perspectives on attitudes towards the future of the Hills.

The Society continues to support the revised Bill and those promoting it, despite what might be seen as its inadequacies. It is the best protection we have for the Hills, an improvement over the existing Act, and an indication of the way forward. The contacts with politicians and other interest groups were fruitful and led to a valuable consensus as to the future of the Hills, if not all able to be enshrined in the Act at this time. We will continue to be represented on the Advisory Committee by Paul Loughton.

The Society wishes to acknowledge the efforts of Hon. David Carter & his colleagues in initiating and promoting the Bill through the House. Also of Hon. Ruth Dyson and Tim Barnett in promoting and furthering the debate within the Select Committee. And of Max Barber as agent for the Authority in the long (15-year) process of drawing up the Bill.

Space precludes fuller details in this Newsletter. If any members wish to see the fuller submissions or Parliamentary record, please contact the President. And if you disagree with our approach, please also let us know.

**Montgomery Spur**  
we are gearing up for the Environment Court hearing against the proposed development of the spur. The hearing is expected to take place in the middle of next year. This will be a big exercise, requiring professional support, but we continue to believe strongly in the cause. More details later, but look for our fundraising flier accompanying this Newsletter. Members who strongly support or oppose this case should let the editor know of their position as a gauge of members opinions.

Dyers Pass Road, Governors Bay  
we submitted in October against a

proposed house development on the Dyers Pass Road hairpin above Governors Bay (Banks Peninsula District). The Subcommittee view is that this is too high up the hills. While reluctant to involve ourselves against private owners, the Society wished in particular to make the point to the Banks Peninsula Council that their District Plan has inadequate provisions for protecting the upper hills against housing.

**Management**  
the subcommittee is hoping in the coming year to advance debate on future land management of the Hills. We believe this will be essential to achieve consensus between the divergent views of the future. And consensus will be essential towards planning for the long term futures of the various land uses.

**Feed back**  
it helps us to know if members do or don't support our public positions on resource issues such as the above. Members feeling strongly one way or the other should feel free to drop a written message to the President or the Editor at the Society's box number. For techno-wizards, my Email is: g.densem@clear.net.nz.

## Mt Pleasant heavy anti-aircraft artillery battery

the following was gleaned from a Department of Conservation brochure following the September outing, which was addressed by Ian Hill of DOC. The remnants of the World War 2 air defense facility on the hilltop east of Mount Pleasant remain much as when decommissioned by the army after the war. They make a good 2-3 hour outing along the Mount Pleasant Bluffs Track.

The role of the battery was to combat high flying enemy aircraft which earlier in the War were expected could attack the Port or Tunnel at Lyttelton. The four guns could each fire a 3.7 inch shell to 10,000 feet (3000m) in 14 seconds. Each was housed in a circular concrete structure with protected sides and shell magazines below ground. A command post forms a fifth structure visible on the site. Here, spotters and range finders predicted the course and speed of the enemy aircraft and relayed information on aiming and fuse setting to the guns.

The emplacements were built between August 1942 and early 1943, when a real possibility still remained of Japanese forces reaching this part of the Pacific. However this threat subsided during 1943 and the guns never needed to be fired in anger.

They were however frequently practise-fired, using drones trailed behind RNZAF aircraft. The battery was manned from January 1943 until September 1944.

Each gun was manned by 10-12 men from the 83rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, New Zealand Army, and the command post by 10-12 women from the Womens Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC's). A camp was built nearby to house gun crew and supporting staff. It consisted of 91 buildings including barracks, quartermaster's store, kitchen, laundry and ablutions blocks, messes and medical post. The foundations of this camp can still be seen although the buildings have gone. Likewise, the guns were removed after the war but the emplacements remain.

The gun emplacements are on DOC land and can be accessed by the public via the Mount Pleasant Bluffs Track and Crater Rim Walkway. The camp site however is on private land. It can be seen from the public land (the boundary is marked by a fence) but please do not enter the private land without the owner's permission. Further details may be found in Gordon Ogilvie's *Enjoying the Port Hills*. The DOC brochure may be obtained for a small charge from the Department office at 133 Victoria Street.



## Sunday Outings

the last year has seen a successful series of monthly outings by the Society, attracting good attendance at most. We have visited Godley Head, Castle Rock, Avoca-Heathcote, Ohinetahi Bush, Omaha Bush, Cracroft House & the Cashmere Caverns, Sugarloaf Reserve, Mount Pleasant and hopefully, by the time you read this, Otahuna and the lower Omaha Bush. A range of locations and activities along both sides of the hills with generally 40–60, but up to 140 people attending. Despite the dry winter we haven't done too well weather-wise, having to postpone to the next week on most occasions. Which is a lot of work. But the outings are achieving our purpose of widening knowledge and enjoyment of the Hills, for both members and non-members and we will continue the series next year. Society membership has widened this year as a direct consequence.

The cultural outings seem more popular than the energetic ones and sometimes we have had trouble matching difficulty levels to the capacities of those attending. This included the March outing when the temperature, forecast to be 20°C, reached 30, on a steep, sun-baked route. And another when a forecast southerly arrived on time for once (sods law), chilling the second half of an outing to an exposed location. Them's the Hills! Watch for the 2002 programme early in the new year.

Thanks to the many members who have turned out to assist, often at short notice and some inconvenience. Without you we would not have the 'bods' to organise and shepherd such numbers through tricky terrain. Thanks too to the specialists, often non-members, who have donated their time to talk on their specialty for the outings. And special thanks to our Secretary Carol Haars and her family for shouldering the monthly task of placing ads, taking phonecalls and compiling lists. Much appreciated Carol. See you all at the end-of-year outing on November 25th.

### Final outing for 2001

Sunday November 25th  
Victoria Park Visitors Centre, 1pm

Paul Devlin will talk on recreation on the Hills in the next 10-30 years and Graham Densem on the Societys views for long term futures on the Hills. About 15 minutes each, with time for questions. We then will have a barbeque, followed by a walk to the Summit Road and back (1 hour) for the energetically inclined.

Essential to register. Phone Carol Haars 385 2840. We will provide sausages, but bring other food you may require. Wet or fine. Charge \$2 per member, \$5 for non-members, children free.

### 'Enjoying the Port Hills'

Gordon Ogilvie's book, which the Society part-sponsored, has sold well and is in its second printing. We have copies for sale at the discounted price of \$24.95 (usually \$29.95). Contact the Secretary. The Society receives a payment for each copy sold, which goes towards funding Port Hills projects.



Ohinetahi Outing April 2001. The Robinson's llamas from next door caught the members attention during a break.



Avoca Outing 2001. Gordon Ogilvie addresses the group at the Gondola Station. Castle Rock behind.



Sugarloaf Outing 2001. Colin Meurk at a stop on Mitchells Track before the southerly change!



An interesting view of Lyttelton from the Mt Pleasant Bluffs Track during the September 2001 Outing.



Coopers Knob from Conical Hill on the south Summit Road.

## As old as the Hills?

the following reference to the Port Hills comes from Arthur Harper's autobiography *Memories of Mountains and Men* published in 1946. Among other fascinating glimpses of Christchurch life in the last half of the 19th Century Harper includes the following incident concerning the Port Hills, from 1901. This was about the time Harry Ell commenced his push for recognizing and conserving the Hills for public enjoyment. On page 18, 'Early Days', Arthur Harper writes:

'Another very favourite ride of ours was to Dyer's Pass or up the old track behind Sir Cracroft Wilson's beautiful home, Cashmere. We often wondered why the people of Christchurch were so slow in realising what outstanding views can be seen from the Port Hills. At the risk of a digression the following will show that this want of appreciation existed even as late as 1901.

'When the late King George, as Duke of York, came to New Zealand in June of that year, one of his party was Mr E. F. Knight, the author of 'Where Three Empires Meet'. He was a great friend of Dr. Jennings, who gave a dinner party in his honour. It was a 'stag party'. When Knight was leaving for his hotel, I asked him to let me take him up the Dyer's Pass road to see one of the great views in New Zealand. The other guests heard my suggestion, and were much amused. They advised him not to waste his time, and Knight began to make excuses about having to be at the Military Review in Hagley Park at 11 a.m., but I persisted, saying I'd call for him in my dogcart at 9 o'clock.

'Next morning I found him still hesitant, but on my promising to get him back for the Review he consented to come. We went up to about the present tram terminus. It was one of those perfect winter mornings, a hard frost, no wind and very clear air, the mountains covered with snow, the plains and the city were at their best. When

I told him that fifty years prior to his visit the plains had been practically uninhabited he admitted that it was an object lesson to anyone of what British enterprise can do. He couldn't understand why the others had tried to dissuade him. His appreciation was shown later when he published his book on the tour, for he devoted two pages entirely to this view.'

The book referred to, *With the Royal Tour* by E.F.Knight (1902), is in the New Zealand Room of the Central Library. The two pages in question dwell more on the plucky achievements of British enterprise to be seen from the vantage point (today's Sign of the Takahe), than on the Hills or the view per se. But the extract does illustrate that it seems always to have been an uphill battle (no pun intended!) to have some sections of the Christchurch community value the wider qualities of the Port Hills. The polarisation of attitude is perhaps as old as the hills themselves.

## National Disease?

The June issue of the Dunedin City Council City Talk magazine features a volunteers group that grew out of the WEA Tramping Club in the 1980s. In the last 15 years the group has taken up the cudgels of track clearance and maintenance, recovering about 15kms of near-lost tracks in the old DCC Silver Stream water catchment west of the city. Meeting on the first Thursday of each month, the group of mostly retired-age trampers heads out with loppers, saws and spades to 'whatever badly needs doing'. Following on from the

group's initiatives, the Council have come to the party with signage, facilities, mapping and brochures over recent years. An area containing Dunedin's heritage of water races has thereby been restored to public access and enjoyment, through a partnership of volunteer initiative and Council support. In 1997 a new track was opened and named after Steve Amies, founder and moving force behind the volunteers, who died that year. It is now organised by Les Murcott. Les says the group enjoys the hard yakka, companionship, and the buzz of 'putting something back'. Sound familiar? I wonder how many other such groups operate up and down the country?