



a passion for the Port Hills

Summit Road Society: 69th President's report 2017

Once again it is my pleasure to present the 69th annual report of the Summit Road Society.

Once again we have had a year that a natural disaster has struck and created havoc for the Society. One would have thought that we had suffered enough with the earthquakes but although the earthquakes caused considerable damage and disruption to our properties and our members the events themselves proved how committed the Society members were in tackling the problem caused by the earthquakes to reopen our reserves to the public again.

2017 was to be a year that would test the resilience of the Society and its members. In February a massive fire engulfed the Port Hills on the western slopes and travelled overnight into our Ohinetahi reserve devastating over 80 hectares of regenerating and established bush. 100's of metres of boundary fence was also destroyed and needed immediate replacement to prevent unwanted animals entering the reserve causing further destruction. The damage caused by the earthquakes paled into insignificance as the time needed to restore the vegetation to that which existed prior to the fire is measured in decades not single years.

Coupled with the problem of establishing natural vegetation is the problem of the negative effects such as invasion of weeds and erosion of exposed soils both through the elements of wind and rain.

When approached by people from all quarters about how the Society would handle the situation I reassured them that nature was very resilient and what's more the Summit Road Society is very resilient as well. This disaster has certainly proven the resilience of the Society. The disaster was put behind us and immediately action was taken to set about making the necessary decisions to make the most of restoration.

The fencing problem was tackled with the assistance of ECan and orders were placed immediately with DOC for replacement plants. Fortunately it was the appropriate time for seed collection so this action was organised.

As restoration was making progress Tony Edney who had taken on the role as organiser resigned for personal reasons and Ann Kennedy willingly took over that role.

There was a lot more action to be taken committee to be set up and enquiries to be answered, offers of help etc. but I will leave those details to Anne Kennedy in her report on Ohinetahi.

Another setback during the year was the death of Terry McCashin who was the vendor for Tussock Hill Farm. The terms and conditions of sale were almost completed and his signing of the purchase agreement was all that was required. With his death a postponement was requested by his estate so we are still waiting for information on continuing the sale.



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Even though it seemed to be that we were having more than our share of negative happenings, positive things still took place. The annual Arbor Day planting was again a success with three schools taking part again. The cost of transporting the children to and from Victoria Park is considered a good investment for the future. One it increases the plant life on the Hills and just might influence the benefits of conservation values to some of the children who participate.

Observing the adults involved, both parents and teachers, they certainly were as keen as anyone to have the trees planted correctly and realised the importance the trees played in the biodiversity of the environment.

Once again we must thank Council Ranger Di Carter and her team for their help and the East Enders for digging the holes ready for the planting. The success of this whole process is due to the team effort put in by all.

A very exciting and positive venture in 2016 was the Predator Free Port Hills programme. The launching of the programme took place in this very hall with almost 70 people attending from all areas that surrounded the Port Hills. There was an immediate response from area working groups to get this project underway as soon as possible. Jeremy will fill in the details in his report. This will be the first time that we will have a Pest Free Port Hills report at the AGM.

It is with sadness that I acknowledge the passing of four members. Terrance Overend, Murray Watson, Gordon Ogilvie and Maurice McGregor. Gordon was a good friend of the Port Hills and the Society, and will be long remembered by his books about the Port Hills and his donation to the Society, the Royalties from one of his books. I attended Gordon's service representing the Society but unfortunately I could not find a memorial book to sign. What a talented family Gordon has. All of his children spoke and even sang songs that they had composed. And finally, Maurice McGregor, honorary life member and former President. Maurice was passionate about the Port Hills. He was a hardworking President and played a fundamental role in moving the organisation from a group of keen volunteers to one with a governance structure that is still effective today. He passed away in April last year at the age of 87. Paul Loughton and I attended his service on behalf of the Society.

In April Board member Tony Edney resigned for personal reasons, it is hoped that his absence from the Board will not be permanent and I personally look forward to his return.

Volunteer hours were up by over 760 from 2016 totalling more than 5811 and that is just the recorded ones Most of this increase was due to volunteers helping with the planting after the fire at Ohinetahi.

Membership has also increased a little to 341, this does not include all the memberships of affiliated memberships.



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There has been no further news of Harry our sponsored Tui so it seems like he will now be just a memory but a close neighbour of mine in Springfield who has almost completed transforming a council woodlot to complete native plantings was most excited that he sighted a tui feeding off the flax flowers, it might have been Harry coming to say farewell.

If this sighting was correct it certainly confirms that the tui release programme has been successful.

Once again we give a big thank you to the Park Rangers, Paul Devlin and Nick Singleton who supported us over the year especially the fire. There was a genuine feeling for us as the damage became apparent and they made themselves available to us for assistance.

The Board has acted on your behalf in the interest of the Society so that it continued to function under very trying circumstances. The Local Body appointees, Lee Sampson, Jed O'Donoghue and Darrell Latham were again loyal and dedicated with a genuine interest in the objectives of the Society.

I wish to have it recorded my personal thanks to all those who make up the Board who give up their time every month to attend meetings.

It would be very remiss of me if I did not mention that our Secretary of 15 plus years John Goodrich chose to retire at the end of the year. We wish John and his wife Liz (who incidentally did far more to help John than we realise) all the best for his retirement and may they now find time to do the things that were put to one side because of commitments to the Society.

We celebrate 70 years in existence next year (2018) and is an opportunity to celebrate the work and accomplishments of the Summit Road Society Inc plus bring to the attention of the public with the intention of obtaining new members.

No report would ever be complete without a special thank you to my deputy Jeremy who never fails to support and fill in for me when I am otherwise committed thanks again Jeremy.

May I say thank you and that includes a special thank you to all our loyal members as well, for your unselfish contribution to this wonderful Society that dedicates itself to the preservation of the Port Hills for the enjoyment of all.

Bill Woods
President
April 2018



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OHINETAHI WORK PARTY REPORT 2017

2017 began like most other years with the work party escaping into the bush to avoid the summer heat and wage war on weeds. We spent five Tuesdays in Faulkners valley clearing passion vine, old man's beard and spur valerian and one week clearing Wai-iti and O'Farrells tracks.

Then the fires came and it was 5 weeks before we returned to the reserve. Two of those weeks it rained and one of those weeks was spent collecting flax seed from locations that Jason Butt from Ecan arranged for us. Tony Edney rallied the Governors Bay people to pod this seed and it was estimated that about 1.5 million seeds were collected. A steering committee, consisting of John Goodrich, Alice Shanks, Paula Jameson and Anne Kennedy was set up to oversee the restoration of the reserve.

From the latter half of March we started tidying the burnt areas in preparation for winter planting, cutting out burnt gorse and broom and grubbing out and poisoning blackberry roots. Disappointingly, the blackberry did what blackberry does and sent up new shoots from its long roots. We collected coprosma, mahoe and five finger seed and scattered it in the burnt area. With the help of Helen Greenep from Ecan we spent a day at Prices valley and another day at Ged's place - a neighbour – and Living Springs collecting kanuka seed. The flax and kanuka seed have been scattered widely over the burnt area.

Also with a grant from Ecan a new fence was being erected along the bottom boundary.

For two days we used the Port Hills Rangers facilities to cut up trellis plastic for plant cages before we transported it to the Bellbird area. Every work day thereafter saw us carrying these rolls of plastic down the hill as we continued to ready the area for planting.

Then on the 30th June planting began and continued until 15th August. Almost 5 000 trees, 630 of which were Sally's (Sally Tripp who donated \$10 000 over 3 years pre-fire), were planted and we would must thank all those who helped us achieve this revegetation of the reserve –The Student Volunteer Army, Aurecon, NZ Rogaining Association, Kaiapoi Long Walkers Club, Westie Walkers, Steve Muir's church based group, Pioneer Tramping Club, Forest and Bird, Andy, Diane, and Miriam plus many others who came. Thanks also to Ged, a neighbour of the reserve, who carried stakes and plant cages up to our boundary on his farm bike.

Ana, a University of Canterbury PHD student, is studying the effects of the fire on the vegetation and how plants grow in different environments such as where gorse, broom, grass were and has plots scattered throughout the burnt areas and also has control plots in unburnt areas.



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The heavy rain of 22nd July caused about 7 slips, 5 of which were in the burnt area and 2 of these took out sections of O'Farrells track and 1 of these 2 also took out a section of the new fence.

By the end of September we had turned our attention to the remainder of the reserve, clearing and weedeating tracks and catching up on maintenance.

Then came November and the big dry –days of 25 degrees plus and no rain. Our new plants were looking rather jaded and dying. We put out a call for people to water them and were thoroughly amazed and grateful at the response as people carried water down to the plants. We lost some but others came through this dry spell remarkably well.

We are still waging war on spur valerian and we would like to thank Di Carter who has overseen helicopter spraying on the bluffs around the Faulkners valley and Mt Ada areas.

QE11 Trust, which administers the covenant on the reserve, donated loppers, secateurs and saws. We would like to thank Alice Shanks, our QE11 representative, for her help and encouragement.

Many , many thanks to John Goodrich who fielded an enormous amount of correspondence, and came to most planting days to issue health and safety briefings and check all was well.

Finally, I would like to thank the work party for the time and effort they have put in over the past year, turning up on weekends as well as Tuesdays, forever cheerful and enthusiastic despite getting thoroughly smutty and muddy thanks to the blackened vegetation and the very wet winter.

Anne Kennedy
April 2018



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EASTENDERS WORK PARTY REPORT 2017

The Eastenders group of the Summit Road Society had another successful year maintaining tracks and reserves on the eastern aspects of the Port Hills.

Of the 22 possible 'outings' for the year, two fell on Public Holidays and four were cancelled due to bad weather. Sixteen days had an average turnout of 17 volunteers which is pleasing to see from the pool of around 45. Around five new volunteers joined up in 2107 and three, Eric Smart and longstanding volunteers John Laidlaw and Robin Fear tendered their resignations.

Of particular satisfaction was the re-opening of the quite spectacular Taylors Mistake track. Officially closed since the 2011 quakes, this track was badly in need of maintenance and the Eastenders were asked to bring it up to standard. Requiring seven working sessions and a total of 315 hours (and after a digger was bought in to fill in under-runners), it is now in excellent shape.

Other sites worked included maintenance on the Evans Pass-Scarborough Bluffs connector track, re-aligning parts of the Captain Thomas track, vegetation clearance and track maintenance of Rapanui and Jollies Bush and broom clearance along the walking tracks around Mt Cavendish. We were also asked to assist Council ranger, Di Carter, by digging around 300 holes on Latters Spur for school children to plant trees to commemorate Arbor Day and a supernumerary morning was spent by five of us scrub clearing tracks in the Mahoe-nui bush reserve. This was to make access easier for a predator control group from Sumner to set trap lines for possums and stoats. All up the Eastenders gave approximately 800 hours of voluntary work in 2017. Around 200 hours were lost to inclement weather.

The annual Xmas BBQ was held at the Rangers station, Victoria Park in December with the other SRS teams, the Omahu and Ohinetahi groups joining in. Thanks to the Port Hills rangers for supplying the food.

Apart from my grateful thanks to all the Eastenders volunteers I would also like to thank two rangers; Hamish Masters whose bailiwick is all of the Council tracks and reserves on the eastern Port Hills where we work and Peter Borchards who is the ranger responsible for the Taylors Mistake track. A close working relationship is essential with Council rangers whose organisation is required to ensure that volunteer groups such as the Eastenders function smoothly and with direction. They are also responsible for the morning tea biscuit ration, any absence of which creates much dissent within the ranks!

Graeme Paltridge
April 2018



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OMAHU BUSH ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Omahu Bush Work Party Report

This year we have 674 man hours worked on Omahu and 180hrs trapping. 5 days were cancelled due to inclement weather and 3 days due to fire restrictions on our access.

The usual turn out is about 6 to 10 workers, we have a few new younger members joined this year.

The main project was to clear gorse and broom around Gibraltar Rock, this is nearing completion. The regrowth of gorse in the grazing paddock was also tidied up. The slip on Rhodes track needed widening again to make it safer for the track mower to pass and a day was spent there.

We have tried using scrub cutter blades on the weed eaters for the gorse, these work well in easy terrain like the edges of tracks etc. The neighbour on the north boundary wants the gorse cleared from his fence line, this may be the next project for our team

We intend to do some more planting to continue along the bank already started. The grazing paddock was not used this year and has got overgrown. But stock is now in place and the farmer is keen to keep the lease.

The Lincoln High team appears to have stopped trapping and our team has taken over their traps.

I would like to thank all our team of volunteers for all their help and advice during the year.

Ian Johnston
April 2018

Omahu Pest Control Report

Traps operating in Omahu Bush are:

Modified Victor (rats, mice and stoats) – 61
DOC 200 (stoats, rats, hedgehogs) – 10
Timms (possums) – 3
Goodnature A24 (rats, stoats) – 10
Goodnature A12 (possums) -10

Traps are checked once a month if possible, with a team of 2 or 3 people on each trip.



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Goodnature baits are used in their branded traps whilst the Doc 200's and the Victors baits vary between a commercial rat lure, eggs and peanut butter. Timms traps use fruit and peanut butter as their lure.

For the calendar year ending 31/12/2017 we caught a total of :

Possums – 6
Rats – 27
Mice – 22
Stoats – 3
Weasels – 1
Hedgehogs - 10

Over the year we have increased our team by 3 to a total of 5 and have had meetings to discuss how we can improve the system - which had grown rather haphazardly under my leadership! We consulted Phil Crutchley from the CCC Rangers who was a great help in getting us to understand where we should be putting our efforts and money. To this end I applied for and received funding for more traps and after putting out chew cards we discovered that possums are our main problem and so these funds are to be used to purchase Sentinel possum traps.

We are also looking at spreading the Victor traps more evenly along the trap lines and even adding another trap line should traps and labour be available.

Paul Tebbutt
March 2018