



a passion for the Port Hills

SUMMIT ROAD SOCIETY: 70TH PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2018

It is my pleasure once again to present the 70th Annual Report of the Summit Road Society.

“A Passion for the Port Hills” is the motto, mission statement or whatever you would like to call it for the Summit Road Society Inc. That passion has been adopted and a positive driving force to protect the Port Hills from inappropriate or undesirable modification by a considerable number of people over the past years.

None were more committed than two people who happened to be related, Harry Ell whose efforts and success regarding the Port Hills and the forming of the Summit Road are well documented and his Grandson and founder of our Society in 1948 John Jameson.

It was a sad loss to us all when John passed away in 2018 after 70 years of being involved in the activities of the Society and in his later years keeping a watchful eye on its progress. I have been told that he was pleased that so many dedicated people belonged to and were committed to the continuation of the aims of the Society. John Jameson will be remembered for his commitment to the preservation of the Port Hills.

There are plans to erect a memorial to the Society so that future generations will know of the man who started the Summit Road Society to protect the open space and freedom of access so that they could enjoy the magnificence of our beloved hills.

2018 also saw the finalisation of the purchase of Tussock Hill Farm, after protracted and sometimes frustrating negotiations. The farm is to be renamed “The Linda Woods Reserve and is still to be officially opened to give the Society the publicity that it deserves by providing over 500 acres of land accessible for all who choose to use it.

A Management Plan is to be drawn up with as much membership involvement as possible. This is the first time the Society has purchased land that is not already had a substantial part planted in native vegetation.

Don't get me wrong there is a substantial amount of vegetation on this reserve some very rare and one of the priorities is to assess how best we can develop that vegetation and still provide tracks for visitors to enjoy. Our other two reserves do not have mountain bike tracks and this is something that we will have to consider carefully as our neighbour Mt Vernon has tracks for mountain bikes due to its similar topography to the Linda Woods Reserve.

All I can say is watch this space for the moment and let me assure you that information will be sent out when we seek your involvement.

With the addition of this reserve to our possessions there will be a large amount of physical work required and as we are limited in our funds relying on volunteer labour will become a priority.

There is a huge benefit in maintaining the volunteer involvement as a major part of the workforce.



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Firstly it provides opportunity for people of all ages to participate in the camaraderie of those who enjoy being outdoors with like-minded people working with nature and the satisfaction of seeing the results of their personal effort.

Secondly it gives a sense of belonging to the organisation especially to those who want to be involved more than being a member and are not a committee orientated person.

There is a mountain of work to be done (no pun intended) over the foreseeable future how we will approach this has not been decided as yet. Most of it will be done by volunteers but do we form a new work party or use existing ones is something that will be decided at the correct time.

2018 was our 70th year in existence making us, as far as I can determine, the oldest privately established conservation organisation in Canterbury. Riccarton Bush was established in 1910 but that was by the Government of the day passing an Act by Parliament.

There are now at least 27 environmental groups with the same outlook as we have. It used to be lonely when we were the only volunteer group. In fact a majority thought that you had to be somewhat a little bent to belong to a society such as ours when conservation was not the buzz word, but perseverance and example has well and truly paid off.

There is one obvious problem with all these new groups the pool of volunteers is getting tighter but I don't see that as a problem just more of a challenge. Harry and John faced and overcame many challenges between them just as we have done with the earthquakes and fire. One advantage we have over the other groups is we provide the greatest diversity and most of our work provides some of the finest scenery in the world.

There was one field trip in March 4th by 10 members to the property of Kai Tegels and John Evans at Rakaia. There they inspected a series of biodiversity and conservation plantings. That trip was published in the newsletter. As a result of this trip it was mentioned that further field trips be arranged.

Our annual mid-winter dinner at the sign of the Kiwi on June 30th was well attended and the food was up to its usual excellent standard. We take a risk having the dinner at the Kiwi as the weather can ruin the night but the Kiwi holds a special place in the hearts of most members.

One event that did not take place during the year was the annual Arbor Day tree planting at Latter's Spur. Both days were rained out so it was decided to abandon the planting for the year. At least the holes dug by the EastEnders will still be there for 2019.

Our membership remained the same as 2018 at 341. Resignations, due mainly to transfers out of the City and members passing on was matched by new members joining.

The volunteer hours are something that we can all be so justifiably proud. Even with the inclement weather we had over the winter, our work gangs completed a total of 3501 a marvellous effort when you consider that bad weather caused the cancellation of scheduled work days.



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When we include volunteer hours of the Board, trapping in Omaha and the volunteer hours of our Predator Free Port Hills programme the total rises to a staggering 9764 hours plus there will be some unrecorded hours. If this is equated out at a modest \$10 per hour combined with the purchase of Linda Woods Reserve, over 1.7 million dollars have been donated to the greater Christchurch area.

The annual City and Society end of year thank you to the volunteers BBQ was held at the Ranger Headquarters in December. There was a good turnout by all work parties and the Board.

On 15th December the Cashmere/Port Hills Community & Business Association held its Christmas function attended by myself, Paula Jameson and her husband John, Marie our Secretary and Paul Loughton. There were several awards presented and the Harry Ell Premier Award went to John Jameson and the Summit Road Society.

After the disastrous Port Hill Fire, the deer living amongst the scrublands moved westwards and now there are several groups living in Omaha Bush coupled with the pigs that also invade our bush this is becoming a disaster for the vegetation so a decision was made to protect the bush from these pests.

The obvious way to control this invasion of undesirables is to provide adequate fencing then eradicate the animals within the fencing perimeter.

A start has been made with the boundary of Peter Graham and over a kilometre and quarter being completed. Negotiations are under way with the neighbours to complete another six hundred and fifty meters. There is a section of approximately two hundred meters that need some tidying up then there is the need to fence off the western edge of the bush up towards the Summit Road and along the boundary of the road to the Graham boundary this will complete the fencing of the whole bush.

This last lot of fencing is our sole responsibility as there are no neighbours to share costs but plans are underway to help defray expenses. We hold high hopes that the help will be forthcoming.

As normal, thanks must go to the City Park Rangers for their support over the last year. I know it is becoming a something that I say every year but will continue to do so as long as the support we receive from these people remains the same. I personally, am always impressed how they respond to any situation that we involve them. It is such a great boost to our cause to have people who treat us as partners. Thank you, Paul, Nick, Di, Hamish, Phil and all the others who so readily offer help or assistance.

Speaking of help and assistance, what our Society has that is so satisfying is the number of volunteers that give their time to further the work of the society. I am talking about the Eastenders, Ohinetahi and Omaha work parties and now there are the volunteers that are involved with Predator Free Port Hills.

I have mentioned them before but their contribution is so substantial that it is worth mentioning again. Their leaders will have their own reports on their activities throughout the year.



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No annual report would be complete without a mention of the Board and the commitment of the members throughout the year. One Community Board member Jed O'Donoghue resigned during the year but was replaced by Tyrone Fields. The other two Community Board appointees Darrell Latham and Lee Sampson have again given their best to our organisation.

I wish to personally thank the other Board members Anne Kennedy, Hamish Grant, Melanie Coker, Paula Jameson, Treasurer Paul Loughton and our Secretary Marie. Who now has her feet firmly under the table, so to speak? No, I have not forgotten our Vice President Jeremy Agar who deserves special thanks for his contribution throughout the year both as a member of the Board and his involvement in Predator Free Port Hills programme.

As members of this Society you can be very proud of those who make up the Board and give up their spare time to attend meetings and ensure that the Society continues to advance the objects and principles that were founded many years ago, seventy in fact.

Since that time The Summit Road Society has led by way of example and manual labour the benefits gained to conservation of the environment of the Port Hills and will continue to do so.

Bill Woods
President
May 2019



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OHINETAHI WORK PARTY REPORT 2018

The Weather The top topic of conversation in New Zealand. After the November-December dry in 2017 we had a steady amount of rain throughout 2018 which kept the ground in good growing condition all year.

The Good News The trees loved this weather. Some of the trees we planted in 2017 post-fire are over 2m high – notably ribbonwood and wineberry. Ngaios are up to 1.5m as are some coprosmas and hebe salicifolia.

In 2018 we planted a further 1000 trees to bring the total planted in the last 2 years to approximately 6000. Many thanks to the New Zealand Rogaine Association and the Student Army for their help again this year. Students from St Martins School, their parents and the Student Army also spent a morning helping to clear around the 2017 plantings. Motukarara Nursery donated some plants. Flaxes, hebes and divaricating shrubs were planted in the area below the carpark at the Sign of the Bellbird.

The Bad News We lost 13 work days to rain – that is one quarter of the year! We managed just one workday in June.

Not only the trees but also the gorse, broom and other weeds loved the weather in 2018. We put the weedeaters over the tracks starting in late October and by December they were again waist-high in grass. We never really got on top of things grass-wise but our hardworking, weedeating gang have continued to do their best in difficult circumstances.

Come October this year I predict there will be a golden glow up at the head of the harbour as the broom in the fire-affected area bursts into bloom. It is thick on the ground and up to 1.50m high. Broom cuttings infested with the broom gall mite has been placed about the area with instructions to the mite to go forth and multiply but so far this request does not seem to have been taken seriously, if at all.

The war on weeds continues to be waged. Spur valerian, old man's beard, passionvine and spindleberry are the main concerns and a wary eye is kept out for other foreigners such as sycamore, cherry and berberis.

Good News and Bad News We have some traps set and in October Russell caught 4 stoats – good they were caught but bad they were there. We also have some good nature traps but only caught 3 possums, a few rats and mice and a hedgehog. At the moment we are installing many more traps.

All the maintenance would not be possible without the loyal and cheerful work-party who meet on Tuesdays. On a good day we can muster 11 but not everyone can come every Tuesday. Many thanks to them all for their help in maintaining the reserve.

Anne Kennedy
May 2019



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EASTENDERS WORK PARTY REPORT FOR 2018

The Eastenders group of the Summit Road Society completed a total of 17 work parties during 2018. Another five were cancelled because of bad weather. The average number of volunteers per work party was 14 (range 4-19).

The Eastenders Track (at the back of Barnett Park, Redcliffs) which required intensive drain and track maintenance was worked on six occasions. This track is now in good condition to accommodate the large number of recreational walkers and joggers using it. The Harry Ell track at Victoria Park also has a very high usage and required four work parties to maintain drains in particular. On another occasion at Victoria Park, the Eastenders dug two or three hundred holes on Latters Spur in preparation for Arbor Day tree planting by school children. The Scarborough Track (between Whitewash Heads Rd and Nicholson Park) needed two work party sessions to make it officially usable again after it was closed following the 2011 quakes. This entailed removal of the old barriers, vegetation and windfall clearance and step construction.

Rapanui Bush and Jollies Bush Reserves on the eastern aspects of the Summit Road required a total of three work parties between them to clear vegetation and drains. Finally, the Mitchells Track section of the Crater Rim walkway (between the Sign of the Kiwi and Sign of the Bellbird) required a work party to clear overgrown vegetation in the bush reserve and make it initially usable for a hill running event being held as no formal maintenance had been done since 2011.

Another successful pre-Xmas BBQ was again held at the Rangers Base Station at Victoria Park. All three work party groups attended along with other SRS stalwarts. Food and BBQ labour was supplied by the Parks Department and is gratefully acknowledged.

The Eastenders volunteer list numbers 45 persons which has more or less remained constant for the past few years. I estimate that about 20 are active on work party details.

I would like to acknowledge the inputs of Hamish Masters and Pieter Borchers, Rangers with the Parks Department, one of whom almost always accompany us on the majority of our work parties and supply the obligatory chocolate biscuits at smoko break. Not only do they proffer sound technical advice but they also act as an important interface between SRS volunteers and the CCC Parks management programmes. Another grateful thanks must also go to Marie, Secretary of the SRS who keeps an eagle eye on administrative details of our group and is always available, helpful and understanding. Finally, I want to thank all the volunteers in the Eastenders group who, with their hard work and devotion, make it possible to keep the reserves and tracks of the Port Hills the wonderful recreational and environmental assets that they are.

Graeme Paltridge
May 2019



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OMAHU BUSH ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

Omahu Bush Work Party Report

This year we have worked 631 man hours. Usually about 6 to 8 workers, we have a few new recruits this year. Greg Gimblett has taken over the pest control for the area and has a separate report.

A big thank you to Tom Smith and Allan Witty who have both retired from Omahu this year after many years dedicated service at Omahu.

The new deer fence between Peter Graham`s property on the south boundary was completed and negotiations with the Penno`s for the next section to the bottom gate are ongoing. We are looking at options for the next section which is very steep and overgrown to meet up with the existing deer fence on the NW boundary.

All the bush tracks require spot spraying every year to keep the gorse seedlings at bay. The new fence line also needs to be sprayed regularly.

The grazing area lease has been taken up by Tom MacGill and has had sheep grazing on it for most of the summer keeping the growth to a more manageable length.

We planted 300 assorted trees continuing along the fence line below Gibraltar Rock and plan to plant more in the same area this winter. The new trees appear to have had the tips nipped off by the deer.

There was a major slip on Rhodes track between the lower gate and the waterfall track, this was repaired by the fencing contractor while he still had machinery in the area.

Thanks to all our volunteers for all their help during the year.

Ian Johnston
May 2019

Omahu Pest Control Report

Pigs and Deer continue to have the biggest effect on bush regeneration. A lot of pig and deer damage is evident throughout the reserve. Significant sightings of deer and pigs have been witnessed. Efforts are underway to install deer fencing around the reserve which will lead in time to an effective control of these ungulates. In the short term the existing fences have been repaired in an effort to redirect migration paths, but with little effect.

Trapping for rats, possums and mustelids has been underway for in the Reserve since before 2016, when Landcare Research left approx. 200 lightweight corflute tunnel traps at Omahu at the end of a research project. Around 100 were removed for intended use at Ohinetahi. In the



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year to December 2018 the number of traps has grown to approx. 179 with the addition of DOC 200, Good Nature self-setting traps, Sentinel and Timms possum Traps.

Paul Tebbutt has taken a one year sabbatical, but Helen Hills and I remain. During the year Jeff Hall, David Jones and Brent Williams have joined the team and remained as regular volunteers to undertake two trap runs each month throughout the year, with approximately 300 volunteer hours.

Trap catch has increased with the addition of new traps, better distribution of traps using a GPS and better trapping techniques. The addition of the Sentinel Possum kill trap has seen a large increase in possum capture numbers from the previous 24 months.

The total trap catch for the year to December is 67 possums, 68 rats, 22 mice, 1 stoat, 3 weasels and 14 hedgehogs across 179 traps as at Dec. The Sentinel kill trap installation was not completed until May, so most of the possum numbers are for some 6-7 months.

Chew card monitoring to determine pest numbers within the reserve was undertaken for the first time at the end of October. Preliminary results indicate the possum population (RTC of 6.4) is relatively low with an average 33% of chew cards interfered with. It could be concluded that the investment in Sentinels has been worthwhile. Unfortunately we did not do the monitoring before starting the possum trapping, to estimate the before population, so we will never truly know. We still have some ways to go to match the results achieved by CCC in Kennedys Bush (RTC 2.9).

Our trap placement has been rationalised with GPS tracking, and we have sought advice on methods to improve capture rates, with trap placement and use of different lures.

The chew card monitoring also indicated rat interference at 64% suggesting a higher than desirable rat population for that time of year. Our efforts will now need to concentrate on more effective rodent control, with additional traps, better traps, trap placement, and a possible baiting programme, as funds allow. Rats and mustelids are the biggest bird predators, so we are keen to see a significant reduction in these pest numbers. Monitoring will become a more regular feature of the work undertaken at Omahu to better track our efforts.

The development of a more comprehensive Predator Control Plan was started in the later stages of the year to present to the January Board meeting. It set out the steps that need to be taken to improve our results across the entire reserve, together with an increase in trap numbers required to achieve a trap network up to best practice standard. Particularly increased numbers of possum and mustelid traps that better target these predators.

We are hopeful that the Council will repeat their 2005 comprehensive bird survey in 2019. That will give us a measure of our efforts to improve bird survival in Omahu Bush.

Greg Gimblett
May 2019