



Society celebrates the acquisition of Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock

Sunday 21 November was a day of celebration for the Society. Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock were handed over to the Society from the Gama Foundation. On a beautiful day, with magnificent views from the Gibraltar Rock car park, a group of Society members gathered to hear Gama Foundation trustees Grant & Marilyn Nelson, Society President Bill Woods, and Garry Moore talk about the importance of the land and its transfer to the Society, helping advance our aim of protecting the upper reaches of the Port Hills.



Grant and Marilyn Nelson with Garry Moore

Omahu Bush is on the western side of the Port Hills, along the Summit Road past the Sign of the Bellbird and stretches from the Gibraltar Rock car-park down towards Tai Tapu. The total land area is 146 hectares and is subject to Queen Elizabeth II covenants. It includes the volcanic outcrop of Gibraltar Rock, an easily accessed block of native bush, with a wide variety of native trees and ferns, native birds such as bellbirds and fantails, and several walking tracks, ranging from 30 minutes to two hours duration, and great views.

A history of Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock

Omahu, the Maori name meaning 'running silently', 'escaping' and 'a place of healing', was given to the area following the escape through the bush by several of the followers of a Maori chief who had been killed in a skirmish on Coopers Knob.

The land was part of Sir Heaton Rhodes' Otahuna estate. Following his death in 1956 the Crown acquired 1,978 hectares, and in July 1957 the land was divided into small farm lots and sold to returned servicemen under the Rehab Loan scheme.

The Prendergasts acquired about 450 hectares including a house which may have been Sir Heaton Rhodes' head gardener's residence. They cleared the lower part of the land, but left the upper slopes in bush. In the early 1980's Dr Brian Molloy, an academic at Lincoln College and honorary botanist for the Summit Road Society, suggested protecting the bush on the upper slopes by means of a Queen Elizabeth II Open Space Covenant in return for the Queen Elizabeth II Trust paying for the fencing. The Prendergasts agreed and the Covenant was signed in October 1985.



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The Queen Elizabeth II covenanted area was sold in 1998 to the Gama Foundation, a charitable trust established by Grant & Marilyn Nelson. The Foundation then embarked on a pest control programme and renewal of fencing, as the bush had suffered from the actions of feral goats, pigs, deer and possums.

Gibraltar Farm was also a Rehab Loan purchase, initially by Douglas Anderson and was later sold and subdivided. The area known as Gibraltar Rock along with the grazing land up to the Summit Road was sold to the Gama Foundation in 2007 and protected by Queen Elizabeth II Open Space Covenant in January 2008.



The Summit Road Society has been actively involved in helping the Gama Foundation with track work and general reserve maintenance. Grant and Marilyn Nelson, appreciating the need for a long-term strategy to manage the land, entered into discussions with the Christchurch City Council and the Summit Road Society, and as a consequence, ownership and responsibility for the day-to-day management of Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock has now passed to the Summit Road Society.

What now for Omahu Bush?

The Society has appointed Paul Tebbutt as Honorary Ranger to watch over Omahu Bush, and arrange for maintenance work to be done, such as;

- ✍ Maintaining foot tracks and vehicle tracks for public access.
- ✍ Controlling animal pests, and invasive plant pests in Omahu Bush
- ✍ Keeping plant pests off Gibraltar Rock and the surrounding pastoral area.
- ✍ Arranging for pasture areas to the north of Omahu Bush to be grazed only by sheep, with the income from grazing being used for work on the property.

So, how can you help?

You are invited to join the **“Friends of Omahu Bush”**. There are already some people keen to help out. You also can help by joining a work party, or helping in the management or promotion of the area. Contact Paul Tebbutt at stabbutt@clear.net.nz or phone 03 384 3086.



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The Society has three other work party groups, the Eastenders, the Ohinetahi group and the Weekendenders, all making a huge contribution to the objectives of the Society, and enjoying themselves at the same time, so we will now have four groups dedicated to the Port Hills.

The Faulkner Brothers of Governors Bay

What to call the Faulkner brothers of Governors Bay? The quiet toilers of the Lyttelton Harbour basin or perhaps Port Hills volunteers extraordinaire. Although well known in Governors Bay, very few realise the extraordinary range of volunteer work they have achieved over 55 years in protecting and enhancing their beloved hills for people to enjoy. And that is because they are private people, and just get on with the work in hand without song or fanfare.

So it is appropriate that their name will be perpetuated in the track that they built from Governors Bay to the Crater Rim, winding its way through the steep escarpment of bluffs and gullies of bush in a spectacular fashion.

Ben and Colin grew up in Spreydon, Ben becoming an optometrist, and Colin a builder working mostly with his builder father. Their connection with Governors Bay started in 1934 when the family bought land in the Bay and built a bach, which they still own.

Later, they bought more land east of Dyers Pass Road grazing 250-300 ewes and so became hobby farmers. Every weekend they headed for the Bay, often walking from the Takahe, keeping fit with scrub clearing, fencing and all the other farming activities associated with managing their flock.

Starting in the 1950's Colin became a wanderer of the hills and tramped widely over Banks Peninsula and other places. He would often take off from Diamond Harbour on a Friday night to reach the old hut on Port Levy Saddle at the back of Mt. Herbert at all hours. Later, the brothers built the Monument Hut on Purau Saddle (which they still maintain) as part of the YHA network to reduce the long walk to the Port Levy Saddle hut.

When the Summit Road Society purchased the Ohinetahi Reserve in the early 1990's, Gordon Kirk, knowing the brothers work ethic and expertise soon had them involved. They had earlier become self-taught expert surveyors, and their skills were put to good use identifying the complex boundaries of the Reserve and locating survey pegs. This often involved cutting survey lines through thick gorse and climbing up bluffs.



Then away they went building Faulkners track. Everyone who walks it today will wonder how a route was found through this extremely steep escarpment. Further tracks were planned, which the brothers assisted in building, including North Boundary, Bush Road, and Cass Ridge. Their fencing skills came into play in closing the boundaries, with all material, including fence posts,



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being carried up the steep terrain of the Reserve.

The following excerpts from the Society's 50 anniversary publication by Jennifer Loughton gives further evidence of the brothers' work on our Reserve. *"The Faulkners track was a work of art, to devise and construct around bluffs and through rocks gorse and flax. The Faulkners were constantly scheming, surveying, pegging, grubbing and benching. After a total of 19 days of hard slog down 200 vertical metres the track was completed by Dec. 5, 1991. The heavy snow storm in Sept. 1992 broke off many branches, completely obliterating the South Boundary and Watling tracks, but Colin and Ben ploughed through it to reach the debris and clear it away.*

A return to surveying in 1993 saw the Faulkners slashing a track making their way through and over chasms and bluffs and through very rough gorse and nettle-covered country to define the north boundary of the O'Farrell block. In 1995 fencing a 400 metre boundary was a challenge indeed. The Faulkners got the job done despite being slowed down by wet muddy conditions and working through a creek and over rocks to drive waratahs to the correct depth.

For at least 3 years the brothers practically worked, lived and slept the Summit Road Society's projects. But Colin and Ben were working on the hills long before this. They established and marked the route from Gebbies Pass to the Packhorse Hut in the 1960s, and maintained the hut for many years until DOC took it over. When the pine plantation was planted on the route they identified and surveyed the paper road leading to the hut, then re-routed the track to follow the legal road.

The track that leads from the hut around the back of Mt Bradley onto Mt Herbert is theirs as well. Even now, in their early 80s, the track to the hut and the Faulkners track is maintained by them. Ben and Colin have worked in other areas of the Port Hills too, and in past years assisted the EastEnders. Due to their farming experience, they have an aversion to gorse and have willingly assisted spraying contractors employed by the Society and the Council to deal with gorse along tracks. This has involved hauling spray hoses up to 900 metres long over rough ground to the areas requiring attention.



In 2006 Ben and Colin received a Canterbury Volunteer Recognition Award, presented by the Hon Winnie Laban, Minister for the Community and Voluntary sector. Part of the citation accompanying the award stated: "typifying the best of volunteer commitment, they have never sought any reward or even recognition for their work.

Now at an age when many of us would have hung up our boots, shovels and grubber,

they can still be seen on the hill working at a pace that would shame others much younger."

Earlier, in 1995 they also received a Banks Peninsula County Community Award for their work when Mayor Noeline Allen solemnly 'knighted' them with their own silver-ribboned grubbers! The Summit Road Society, and all those who enjoy recreation on the Port Hills, have much to thank the Faulkner Brothers for.



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Trip to Quail Island August 2010

A small group of hardy souls headed to Quail Island for our annual trip assisting with planting. The weather was not too bad, but a bit cool. However, we soon warmed up with plenty of the usual routine of digging holes, planting shrubs and then settling the shrubs into their new 'bed.'

Lunch was a welcome break, and then it was back to work with more planting, and then tidying up.

We still had time for a walk around the Island, including having a good look at the trees and shrubs which had been planted first, and are looking extremely good.



Numbering now in many thousands, trees and shrubs in those parts of the Island identified for planting, our own members must have planted literally hundreds of those we can now see, so well done to those who have enjoyed the trip to the Island over the years.

Why not come along next time? The work is not too onerous, the trip is free, and there is always time for a walk before catching the ferry back to Lyttelton.

More about Quail Island can be found at the website of the Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust: www.quailisland.org.nz

Ferns of the Port Hills by Rosemary Koller & Sally Tripp

This new book features sixty three species of native ferns and fern allies and three naturalised ferns of the Port Hills. It features descriptions and stories, lavishing illustrated with colour photos, along with a foreword by Hugh Wilson. To order, provide the following details to:

Sally Tripp, R.D.1, Lyttelton, 8971

Tel: 03 329 9752 email: sally.tripp@xtra.co.nz

Name _____

Address and post code _____

Tel: _____ email: _____

No. of books _____ Books: \$30 each

Post & Packaging \$3 (Internet banking available for payment)

Total Payment _____ Cheques payable to: R. Koller & S. Tripp



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Ferries Cross remembered with Trees

Ferries Cross, a long time member and dedicated Port Hills volunteer died this year. His family donated a funeral collection to the Society and with this we purchased native seedlings for our Ohinetahi Reserve.

On 31st of August, Ferries' grandson Shane Thrower, a teacher with the Kimihia Adventure Programme attached to Linwood College, brought along about 20 of his pupils to our Reserve to plant the seedlings alongside Ngaio Track, assisted by our own volunteers. Ferries' great grandson joined us too. It was a beautiful spring day with the pupils obviously enjoying being out of the classroom and planting native trees.

As Shane commented, 'it was a win-win situation for the Society, for the pupils and for the memory of Ferries.' What an excellent way for Ferries' family and the Society to remember a great stalwart of the Society.

Tuis on the Port Hills

It's been exciting to learn of recent sightings of tuis on the Port Hills south of the Sign of the Kiwi.

A bird has been seen by several people, in the Zephyr Terrace valley above Governors Bay, feeding in gardens, and there has also been a positive sighting of a tui in our recently acquired **Omahu Bush Reserve !!**



A resident in Zephyr Terrace has christened the bird in their valley, Ruby.

Our **Ohinetahi Reserve** which borders Zephyr Terrace valley is well prepared for tuis after six years of intensive pest control and planting.

Here's hoping that a colony will eventually become established. Keep an eye out for them when walking the tracks in our Reserves.

It is assumed that these tuis are from the release of 72 in Hinewai Reserve, behind Akaroa, over the previous two years, as some of these birds have spread widely throughout the Peninsula.

The Society provided some financial support to the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust for this project, and we now have our 'own' bird, pictured above, named **Harry Ell**.

Might it have been him visiting our Omahu Bush Reserve ??



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Return of the Native

On June 27 the Society made a presentation at the 'The Return of The Native' forum on biodiversity in the Lyttelton Harbour Basin. We were one of dozens of groups at a very busy forum at Diamond Harbour. This was a joint project of the Christchurch City Council and local environmentalists, and was organised around the theme of the importance of restoring indigenous species, both flora and fauna.

Mike White gave an overview of the Society, with an emphasis on our Ohinetahi Reserve on the hills of the inner harbour catchment. Mike outlined the work of his committee to maintain tracks, plant natives, and trap predators.

Two Ohinetahi neighbours also spoke. Andrew Crossland, the Council 'bird man', showed how an extensive possum trapping programme in Kennedy's Bush had resulted in a steady upward trend in native birds. Sally Tripp, from the Landcare Group in Governors Bay, described the community's partnership with ECan to eradicate old man's beard, a project which links to our own more modest efforts, through the Weekenders' ventures near the SugarLoaf. Other speakers included Hugh Wilson, from Hinewai, who outlined the unique natural history of Banks Peninsula; Trevor Partridge, who concentrated on plant life, and Islay Marsden, on marine biology.

The forum provided a great deal of information, but its main purpose was to introduce the many individuals and groups to each other. In this it was most successful. Attendees went home keen to maintain and extend contacts in order to achieve the vision for a ten-year coordinated effort to get rid of pests.

The Society is well placed to help. We are a comparatively large group, with a membership from all over, but predominantly from the city side of the Port Hills, part of the same ecological region as the harbour basin. And we have a long and valued tradition of working with Council rangers to reach mutual goals.

Godley Head Trip July 2010



Twenty four members and friends met up on a lovely fine day for a look around Godley Head, five of whom walked from Taylors Mistake to Boulder Bay and then up the hill to meet with those who had driven.

Courtesy of the Godley Head Heritage Trust, we were able to have lunch and a cuppa in what used to be the Officers' Mess building, after which Trust Historian Peter Wilkins gave us a fascinating talk about the history of the area. It was then time for a walk around the various buildings and historic sites, accompanied by more very interesting commentary.



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Something which casual visitors don't see is the contents of one building containing two Bofors guns, which are much bigger than might be thought.

More about the Trust and its activities can be found on their website:

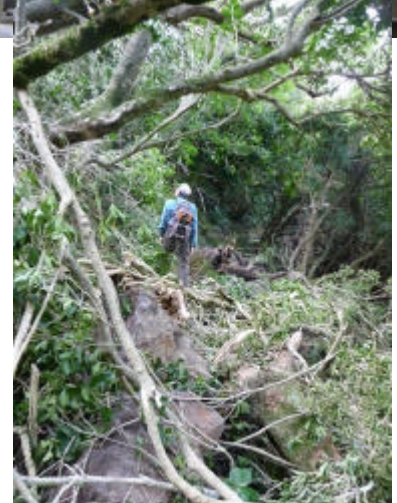
<http://godleyhead.110mb.com>

Ohinetahi Reserve after the earthquakes

Trish Faulkner

The Tuesday Working Party members have been out and about in the Reserve since Saturday 4 September, and on 14 September I spent some time with Mike White putting out some signs warning others of damage on some of our tracks.

We did not venture down Bivvy track as it had already been reported that there was extensive disturbance part way down (and likely to still be somewhat unstable), probably resulting from material falling off Mt Ada. This slip has caused Ellas track to be deemed a danger to walkers by the CCC Rangers, who later put red tape to close the section of Ellas track between its northern end and the spot where it touches the Crater Rim track about 500m south. We also placed a sign at the top of Bivvy, indicating that it is also closed.



Apart from these two locations, the most extensive obstruction or damage to tracks appear to be on South Boundary track, especially on the section between its junction with top of Titoki and where South Boundary comes out into the open above the llama paddock before joining Faulkners track. A large slip off the rocky promontory high on the top ridge brought debris crashing downhill and crossed the track, which is now a mass of rocks of varying sizes and small trees which obstruct walkers' progress for about 40 metres. There are also some small slips and rocks lying on the track in a few places from there back to the junction with Bush Road.



Mike White

Walking the tracks of Ohinetahi on the Tuesday after 4 Sept. was somewhat unnerving. Boulders the size of chairs were scattered about bddged in unusual places, with the route they had followed from high on the bluffs showing up clearly. There were also some major rock falls cutting a swathe several metres wide through the bush, wiping out substantial trees and reducing them to match wood.



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One major rock avalanche crossed South Boundary and another North Boundary track. Some rocks, as they set off, must have been the size of SUVs as their shattered remains are still substantial. Colin and Ben Faulkner and others have been busy with track repairs, and all tracks are now negotiable.

It is difficult to assess if there is further unstable rock high on the bluffs, but there is no evidence that the aftershocks have caused further rockfall. Thankfully, the saturated soil due to the wet winter held firm on the open grasslands of the Reserve with no evidence of slips. Omahu Bush appears to have survived the shocks unscathed, although a major slip had occurred prior to the earthquake.