



a passion for the Port Hills

Newsletter, Summer 2020-21

Ben and Colin Faulkner

Ben and Colin Faulkner were two unassuming characters who sheltered themselves from the limelight and dedicated their later lives to working and supporting all manner of activity relating to walking tracks of the Lyttelton Harbour Basin and Banks Peninsula beyond.

Colin died in 2014 and Ben in August 2020 aged 92, without fanfare or funeral celebration as was their wish.

The Summit Road Society has much to thank the brothers for from the time Ohinetahi Reserve was created in the early 1990s. To cap off their efforts over nearly 30 years, Ben donated \$10 000 to enable a rock to be removed that was threatening the Faulkners Track due to the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011.



The Faulkner brothers about 2007 - Colin (left) and Ben (right)

Ben and Colin were born in Spreydon in a home built by their father where they lived their entire lives until illness forced them into health facilities. Ben trained and worked as an optometrist and Colin followed his father into the building trade. From an early age, they loved walking the local hills and became associated with Governors Bay when the family built a bach there. Later the brothers bought more land there and became hobby farmers with 200-300 sheep. Mostly they walked to Governors Bay from the tram terminus at the Takahe. They were keen explorers of the outer Peninsula too, and built the Monument Hut on Purau Saddle to give themselves a good start on weekends by using it on Friday nights after walking from the ferry at Diamond Harbour. The hut remains there today.

But the brothers were adventurers beyond the local hills. In the 1950s, they trekked in untracked terrain from Jackson's Bay, South Westland, to the Hollyford Valley in Fiordland, then traversed the Routeburn Track and walked out to Elfin Bay on Lake Wakatipu to catch the Earnslaw to Queenstown. Many other multi-day trips in the Southern Alps followed. Their 12 month OE included crossing Australia, travelling through Europe and the UK, crossing the USA east to west, then sailing on to Japan before returning home.

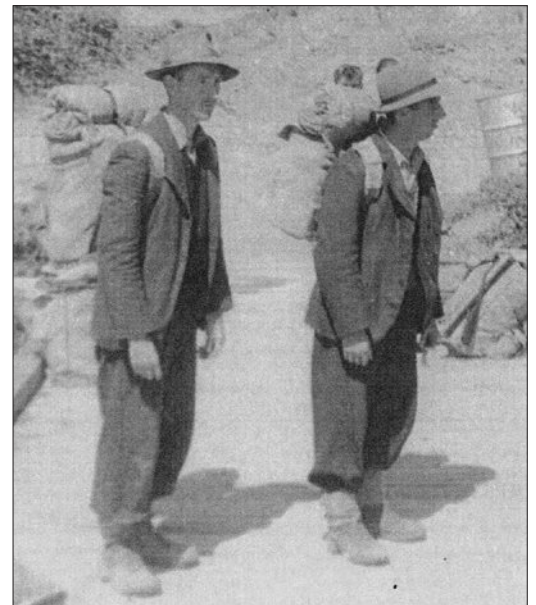
The Summit Road Society purchased 29 hectares above Governors Bay to form our Ohinetahi Reserve in 1991. From that base, adjoining small blocks were purchased to create the 150 hectares it now is, with a most complex boundary. Ben, obviously very bright at maths, taught himself surveying and together the brothers spent

months cutting through scrub and over rock outcrops to settle the boundary lines. Gordon Kirk once said; 'If the brothers surveyed the boundaries, they will be right'.

The spectacular track named after the brothers was built and maintained by them for many years. The following excerpts from the Society's 50th anniversary publication, 'Fifty Years Along the Road' by Jennifer Loughton, describes the building of Faulkners Track and other work carried out by them in the early days of Ohinetahi 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 nineteen days of hard slog down the two hundred metre drop, the Track was completed by December 5 1991'.

'The heavy snow storm in September 1992 broke off many branches, completely obliterating South Boundary and Watlings Tracks but Ben and Colin ploughed through it to reach the debris and clear it away. A return to surveying in 1993 saw the Faulkners slashing and track-making their way over chasms and bluffs and through very rough gorse and nettle-covered country to define the north boundary of the O'Farrell block'. [The Big Snow started on 27 August 1992. The brothers went to clear the track in early September as the snow lasted for weeks.]



The Faulkner brothers setting off for their tramp down the West Coast in the 1950s.



Ben & Colin with the Hon. Luamanava Winnie Laban, Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2006

'In 1995, fencing the 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, creating and maintaining tracks. 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 old paper road leading to the Hut and rerouted the track to follow the legal road. The track that leads from the hut around the back of Mt Bradley and Herbert is theirs as well, and so is the track leading from Orton Bradley Park to the Hut. Appropriately this track has recently been named Faulkners Track by DOC.

In spite of the brothers avoiding publicity throughout their lives, their work has certainly been officially recognised. In 2007 they received a Canterbury Volunteer Recognition Award. Part of the citation accompanying the award stated 'Typifying the best of volunteer commitment, they have never sort any reward or even recognition for their work. Now at the age when many of us would have hung up our boots, they can still be seen on the hills working at a pace that would shame others much younger'. (Ben was 79 at the time with Colin's age unknown.)

Earlier in 1995, they also received a Banks Peninsula County Award for their work on the hills when the mayor at the time, Noeline Allan, solemnly 'knighted' them with their own silver ribboned grubbers!

In June 2018 at his room at the Addington Lifestyle Care facility, there was a small celebration for Ben's 90th birthday. John Goodrich ex Secretary and another SRS member were present, together with a small number of his friends. Although he had insisted on no birthday celebration, he enjoyed blowing out the candles on the cake and it was clear that overall he enjoyed the occasion.

Mike White

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting took place on Tuesday 8 September at the Old Stone House. President Bill Woods opened the meeting and welcomed members and supporters. A minute's silence was observed for Society stalwart Ben Faulkner who had recently passed away.

Following ratification of last year's minutes, the reports were presented. What a busy and constructive year for the Society! The reports are available to download from the Summit Road Society's website under News and Events.

We then moved on to the Election of Officers. Bill Woods was reconfirmed as President and Jeremy Agar as Vice President. Long serving Treasurer Paul Loughton advised that he is retiring as Treasurer. Thank you very much Paul for your many years of service as Treasurer to the Society. You have steered the Society into a solid financial position. Paul is staying on as a Board Member, along with Paula Jameson, Anne Kennedy and Melanie Coker. A new Treasurer was elected, Peter van Hout. Peter is a qualified accountant and is currently the Financial Services Manager for the Methodist Church. Peter was also a close friend of former Board Member, Hamish Grant. After Hamish passed away last year, Peter made contact with the Board of the Society to offer his assistance. We are pleased to have you on board Peter.

General Business included discussion on the proposed John Jameson Lookout, a possible vote of thanks for volunteers and promotion of the Summit Road Society. Due to covid-19 restrictions, the planned talk on predator control at Ohinetahi and Omahu is postponed to 2021.



Fundraising opportunity

Ultra-Marathon Marshal Station 30 January 2021

The Board has agreed to staff a marshal station at the Sign of the Bellbird during the Port Hills Ultra Marathon as a fundraising opportunity for the Society. This will involve looking after the aid station and providing course marshals. We need 20 volunteers on Saturday 30 January 2021, 7am to 12pm at the Sign of the Bellbird carpark (carpooling is available). We need your help!

For more details please contact Marie Gray—

Ph 349 3409 or email:

secretary@summitroadsociety.org.nz

A conservationist in the making

In September last year, the Board was delighted to receive a donation from Alice Ackroyd. Alice, with assistance from little brother Rupert, held a bake sale outside her house and raised \$164. She decided to donate this to the Summit Road Society for tree planting. This year, Alice, Rupert and their mother Helen, came up to Ohinetahi to plant some trees near the Sign of the Bellbird.

Great work Alice! 🍷



Alice planting a tree at Ohinetahi



Alice's bake sale

Kids Talk

This is the story of Ben's walk in the hills to look at the birds and to have an ice cream. We saw birds and also a lizard. The lizard was coming out to bask in the sun. When it gets too hot for the lizards they go and hide in the trees and shrubs. My favourite bird on the walk was the fantail because we have them at our bach. Out there they fly around and chase us in the garden looking for insects to eat. The weather was quite fine and sunny and we got rather hot while we were walking. That meant the ice creams tasted extra good. My ice cream had two scoops: chocolate and strawberry sorbet. The other good part was the view from the cafe at the top. We could see down to the harbour.

Ben Holborow

Walking the Harry Ell Track up to the Sign of the Kiwi



Ben and cousin Alex at Victoria Park



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 Website: www.summitroadsociety.org.nz
 Email: secretary@summitroadsociety.org.nz

Bank accounts for online payments and donations:
 Summit Road Society: 03-0802-0104055-00
 Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust: 03-1592-0321653-00
 Credit card donations can be made through the secure website:
<https://givealittle.co.nz/org/summit-road-society>

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Linwood-Central-Heathcote	Jackie Simons	027 473 2795
Port Hills Rangers	Paul Devlin	941 7570
Eastenders work party	Graeme Paltridge	384 3592
Ohinetahi work party	Anne Kennedy	337 0364
Omahu Bush work party	Ian Johnston	332 8319

We are a voluntary society working to enhance, preserve and protect the natural environment, beauty and open character of the Port Hills of Banks Peninsula for people to enjoy. We need and welcome contributions to our work through memberships, donations and corporate sponsorships, bequests, participation in work parties (non-members welcome—but why not join us as well!)

Follow us on Facebook - **Summit Road Society & Predator Free Port Hills** for regular updates

Kids' Nature Trail Walk

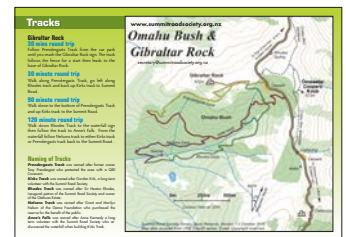
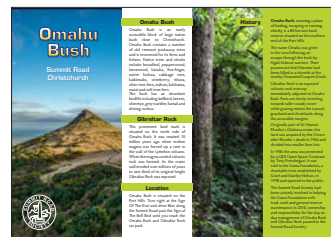
As part of the Banks Peninsula Walking Festival, we led a Kids' Nature Trail Walk at Omaha Bush on 28 November. We were delighted to launch our new Omaha Bush brochure at this event. Special thanks to Janey Thomas for her graphic design work. Copies of the new brochure can be obtained from CCC service centres, visitor centres and other popular locations around the Port Hills.



Kids Nature Trail Walk at Omaha Bush

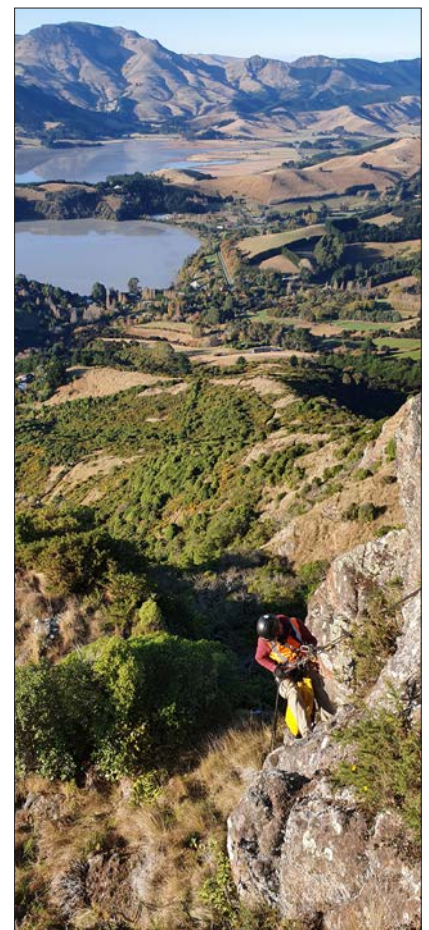
Following the launch of the new brochure, we headed down Prendergast, Kirks and Nelsons Tracks to Anne's Falls. The kids were given a checklist of tasks to complete, such as taking a selfie with Gibraltar Rock in the background, feeling the bark of a kōtukutuku (native fuchsia) and smelling the leaf of a lemonwood. The waterfall is very picturesque and a great half-day walk for families. We stopped for lunch at the bottom of Rhodes Track and were delighted to see a couple of kahukura butterflies visiting a flowering kānuka. During the walk, we identified horopito, kānuka, tōtara, supplejack, ongaonga and a variety of different ferns. The majestic kahikatea and mataī standing side by side are something special. It is rare to see such old trees on the Port Hills. We had heard there were kawakawa in the reserve so we were keeping a close eye out. We managed to spot one baby plant and one mid-sized tree. After lunch we headed back up through the bush to the carpark. That trek back up the hill can be tough but the kids kept themselves busy discussing their favourite characters in Harry Potter. All in all, a fantastic day and it was great to see the kids enjoying themselves in the bush. Thank you to John Clemens for sharing his botanical knowledge and to Paul Loughton and Melanie Coker for helping as marshals.

Marie Gray



Spur Valerian Control at Ohinetahi Reserve

In order to protect the flora on the rock outcrops at Ohinetahi Reserve, the Society has commenced a six year plan to contain spur valerian on the Faulkners Bluffs using specialist abseil contractors. Our volunteers remove spur valerian in accessible areas. We are very grateful to the WWF Community Conservation Fund (supported by the Tindall Foundation), Christchurch City Council and Whaka-Ora Healthy Harbour for providing the necessary funding. We have also produced a brochure to raise awareness about spur valerian and this was delivered to residents in Governors Bay in October. Thanks to Russell Genet and members of the Ohinetahi work party for their support.



Spur Valerian Control at Ohinetahi Reserve

The World's Largest Collection of Mountain Mules



Mountain Mule packs at Ohinetahi

John Jameson Lookout

The Sign of the Bellbird carpark overlooks our Ohinetahi Reserve and the panoramic view of Lyttelton Harbour. It is a favourite stopping point for locals and visitors alike. During the latter years of his life, John Jameson, the Society's founder, proposed a project to further enhance the area. John passed away in March 2018 and he left a bequest to help progress this project.

Over the last two years, planning has been gathering momentum. Following discussions with key partners, detailed landscape concepts have been developed. These will be refined as we progress into the project's final design phase. Our objective is to create an area where all can enjoy the iconic view over the Harbour and learn about the area's cultural and natural heritage. This includes the legacy of Harry Ell and the role of John Jameson and the Summit Road Society. We have been working closely with Ngāti Wheke of Rāpaki to incorporate the history and stories of mana whenua. The area will also provide a gateway into Ohinetahi Reserve and the walking tracks on offer.

We are very grateful to landscape architects, Graham Densem and Nic Kaye, and engineering firm, Davie Lovell-Smith, for their assistance with this project.

The Society's Board has been actively fundraising and we were delighted to recently receive \$50,000 from the JD Stout Charitable Trust. We have now raised 70% of the money required and would welcome further donations towards this project.



Concept design for the John Jameson Lookout

...The Packs not the People

Members of the Ohinetahi Work Party are wondering if they have the World's largest surviving collection of Mountain Mule packs still in use.

They find these are excellent for carrying cages and plants during tree planting. Up to 50 flattened cages can be carried at any one time through the straps in the outside as well as up to 16 plants inside.

The Mountain Mule with its H frame was first developed by Arthur Bevan Napper, an Australian, while working at the Arthur's Pass Hostel in 1950. The Australians have claimed Phar Lap, the Pavlova and Split Enz, so to get our own back we claim the Mountain Mule. Mr Napper used his wife's sewing machine to sew the first canvas packs and manufacturing started in Christchurch in 1953. Melbourne manufacturing followed in 1962 and they were exported to England. They became the iconic New Zealand tramping pack during the 1960s and 1970s and were used extensively by trampers and hunters.

Ed Hillary and George Lowe used modified versions on the successful Everest expedition in 1953. In 2018, the Canterbury Museum paid \$16,000 for a canvas bag Ed used on Everest. Goodness knows what his Mountain Mule would fetch.

The New Zealand pack was loosely based on the North American 'trapper'. The first commercial tramping packs were invented by Ole Bergan who started Bergan Packs in 1908 but they were usually A frame packs. The H frame packs could carry heavier loads more comfortably than A frame packs. Not until the late 1970s and 80s did pack technology start to morph into the more common, and more comfortable, modern packs. Mountain Mules came in two sizes, the Standard, which sometimes had a tap in the outside frame to hold cooking fuel, and the Tanker or the Expedition.

The Ohinetahi packs are older than some of our volunteers and the owners are somewhat reluctant to say how long ago they bought them for some reason. One unidentified party member admitted to buying his in 1960!!

Like the packs, some of the volunteers are a bit weather-beaten and frayed around the edges but definitely still going strong. They would always welcome any new volunteers to help carry the load.

Anonymous Mountain Mule Owner

If you would like to make a donation, especially in memory of John Jameson, please contact the Secretary:
secretary@summitroadsociety.org.nz or phone 349-3409

To Yield Up The Toll-Gate Would Be To Abandon The Rights Of Pedestrians

To the Editor of THE SUN

Sir,—So your correspondent “Open Road” is forced to the conclusion that only “a selfish hobby” is behind the thought, foresight, and work in the laying off of a road along the hill tops on the Port Hills, and over the beautiful hills of Banks Peninsula, making accessible the great and beautiful views for all to enjoy. Only a selfish hobby—looking to the remaining areas of native bush; working to raise the purchasing price and organising sympathetic support in order that every area of native bush may be set aside for the preservation of the beautiful flora and fauna for coming generations to enjoy; searching out and securing all the vantage points from which great and beautiful views may be looked upon; laying pathways away from the impatient man with a vehicle on the road, for the pleasure and enjoyment of the man or woman who prefers walking, or walks just because he or she cannot afford to own or drive a motor car; feeling and seeing the necessity of roadside houses for refreshment and shelter for the travellers along this 53 miles’ long hilltop-road—according to the views of your correspondence, who uses the working man as a stalking horse, all the Summit Road work is just the outcome of a “a selfish hobby.”

After reading your correspondent’s letter I am “forced to the conclusion” that

Paul Loughton discovered an old newspaper in a drawer featuring a letter to the editor by Harry Ell on the toll-gate. It may be 90 years old, but the objectives remain the same today.

his outlook on life is more in the line of a “clutch” and “the main chance.” The hilltop and hillside pathways, made and to be made, will cover as many miles as there will be of motor road, but with this difference: the Highways Fund can be used to provide for the cost of keeping the road in repair for motorists, but cannot be used to keep the pathways in order for the pedestrians to benefit by.

Already there are several miles of pathways, formed years ago, which have become so overgrown that they are unusable. Means must be found for the cost of keeping these pathways in order; the pedestrian is a citizen whose interests are just as much entitled to attention as those of the motorists, and the toll-gate on the Summit Road is the only way of providing the cost of keeping the pathways, which have been made for the pedestrians, in order.

In fighting for the retention of the toll-gate I am fighting for the rights of the pedestrian, that he may have the pleasure of taking the pathways along the hilltops and hillsides. To yield up the toll-gate would be to abandon the rights of the walker, and that I will never do, whatever the consequences may be to me.

This is my reply to your correspondent “Open Road.”
—I am, etc., **H. G. ELL.**

*The Sun, Christchurch.
23 May 1930*



AROUND THE RESERVES

Eastenders

The Eastenders volunteers have been active for the past six months with tidying up of the ever popular Harry Ell Track in Victoria Park, re-benching and upgrading Cedrics Track and part of the Crater Rim Track near Sugarloaf and attacking nassella tussock on the SRS Linda Woods Reserve. Nassella tussock is an invasive plant originally from South America, and is able to quickly spread and dominate plant communities. It has a high reproduction capability, with upwards of 120,000 seeds being present on one mature plant. It tolerates a wide variety of environmental conditions and thrives in sunny, dry hill country so has the potential to cover large areas of land. Nassella tussock is declared a pest in Pest Management Plans in the regions where it is found and there are regulations which require land occupiers to control this plant. Because nassella is not always an easy plant to recognise, at least to the uninitiated, we have been fortunate to have the assistance of ECAN and CCC biosecurity rangers who have ‘tutored’ us on a couple of occasions in its recognition and removal amidst the swathes of native silver tussock which predominate on the Port Hills. A small team from the Eastenders have spent a couple of mornings on the quite steep slopes of Linda Woods Reserve, to date sweeping the Horotane Valley part of the Reserve. Although the area is known from previous checks to have only a low density of the offending tussocks, we have had moderate success with around 40 found so far. Another two sessions will be required to complete the whole Reserve and it will need to be done on an annual basis.

Graeme Paltridge



The Eastenders hard at work benching Cedrics Track

Ohinetahi Work Party

Despite this winter and spring being very dry, we lost 5.5 days to rain. We were grateful to receive a good rain in mid-November as things were beginning to look desperate. This also boosted grass growth on the tracks. Andrew, Elliott, Murray and Robin have been busy weed-eating them.

Trees were planted in the fire area in late July and early August, bringing our total of fire plantings to just over 8000.

Murray has taken on the responsibility of preparing a ‘weed of

the month' feature for the Summit Road Society Facebook page. So far boneseed and spur valerian have been featured.

Spur valerian is coming to the end of its spring flowering cycle and will be setting its windblown seeds. If you have this plant in your garden, please deadhead it to avoid it spreading and ask your friends and neighbours to do likewise. If you want to see why we regard this plant as a menace, take a stroll down Faulkners and North Boundary Tracks. This spring's show is almost over but there will be a repeat performance in autumn.

Tree lucerne was spotted growing in the burnt area and a large copse of about 24 trees and a smaller one of about 7 trees were dealt with, plus other single trees. Sorry, kererū. We know this is a favourite food plant for you, but this plant is a menace to the native bush as it grows tall and does not get shaded out as gorse and broom do.

Talking of broom, the broom gall mite has at last been sighted in the Cass Ridge Track area. This mite attacks Scotch broom (Scotch broom is your normal bright yellow broom) and weakens and even kills the plant. This should significantly assist the regeneration of this area post-fire.

Anne Kennedy



Ohinetahi volunteers preparing the ground for planting on O'Farrells Track

Ohinetahi Predator Control

The enlarged trap network at Ohinetahi has now been in place for two years. Catch numbers for 2019 were 194 predators (from 185 traps) and this year to October the catch stands at 296 (from 226 traps). Possum numbers have remained much the same at 65 but rat catch numbers have expanded to 114 from 85 for 2019. Increased numbers of hedgehogs (67/14) and mice (23/0) have been recorded.

I set about trying to understand what this meant during the year with chew card and tracking tunnel monitoring methods across the reserve. Have predator numbers increased within the reserve as the trapping results would indicate?

Do we need to lay bait to lower rat numbers and increase bird survival during the breeding season?

Chew card monitoring done at two times during the year has indicated lower interaction with rats (10% for both January and November) versus 20% in October 2019. The rat catch for the months where we undertook monitoring support some correlation, with 23 rats caught in October 2019 (20%), 12 in January 2020 (PAI 10%) and 9 in October 2020 (PAI 10%). Early results suggest that our monitoring is reflecting the catch numbers, with higher PAI reflected in a higher catch. PAI stands for Pest Abundance Index.

However our monitoring in 2020 suggests lower numbers are present, but we are catching more. More work required! We are seeing areas within the reserve where rat catch is higher than other parts (and therefore more rats are present). Our tracking tunnels to date have not shown any rat interaction when we have conducted the tests. However chew card interaction is low. From the work we have done at Omahu, we would regard 10% as low so this may be a reflection of low numbers. A repeat of the tracking tunnel cards is about to commence at the time of writing and hopefully will help us better understand what is going on.

Possum interaction varied from 8% in 2019 to 18% and 25% in 2020, yet the catch numbers are similar. The possum PAI still indicate low numbers.

I keep reminding myself that it's not an exact science.

Two new 'young' trappers, Jacob Wright and Emily Tremain, have joined us recently and have taken over Ellas and Wai-iti trap runs to free me up. Both have been active over the past months as part of the Omahu team, and Emily was a familiar face at the Tuesday work group before she got a full time job.

We are presently reviewing all trap locations for non-performing traps and shifting these traps, with some resulting improvements in catch numbers.

Summer is upon us and we can expect an increase in stoat and weasel numbers.

Greg Gimblett



Stoat caught in a DOC200



Planting trees at Omahu

Omahu Bush Predator Control

I continue to greatly appreciate the dedication of the core volunteers who undertake the two trap runs every four weeks in all weathers, together with the other tasks that go with maintaining a trap network and predator control plan.

We are coming to the end of five years of predator control (since keeping records anyway) at Omahu Bush, and it's time to reflect on our achievements. In October we reached the significant milestone of 1000 predators dispatched from Omahu. Included in this number are over 300 possums, a similar number of rats, over 200 mice, 26 stoats, 26 weasels and over a hundred hedgehogs.

Our network of traps sits at 245, where it has been for more than 12 months, but the catch numbers have increased in the past year to 405 (to November) from approximately 340 in 2019.

We continue to undertake monitoring twice a year and the results have led us to do another annual baiting programme during winter. Good results were achieved with suppression of our targeted species—rats, based on the recent tracking tunnel survey in October. We expect that this will now be an annual exercise to suppress numbers during the bird breeding season.

Possoms have already reinvaded the reserve as we experienced last year, with a record catch in October of 21 possums.

Pigs have become a significant issue for us, as they now target the possums caught in our traps, and we have lost 5 traps as a result over the past year or so.

With summer now upon us, we expect to see an increase in mice numbers, as we experienced last year, and with that an increase in stoats and weasels.

Greg Gimblett



Pig damage to the understory

Omahu Work Party

It is a credit to our dedicated team of volunteers to drive south along the Summit Road and see Gibraltar Rock, the grazing paddock and the road frontage clear of gorse and broom. There is still plenty left in less obvious places to keep us busy. Removing elderberry trees while they are in flower is another ongoing project at this time of the year.

Work parties have returned to normal since the lockdown was lifted and our team is back to its usual enthusiasm and solving the problems of the world at tea breaks.

The fencing is well under way but the clearing work has made an excellent nursery for gorse and thistles so we now have a major spraying program which will be an annual project.

Another 200 trees were planted this winter and are growing well. The bush tracks are all in good order after removing several windfalls and a foliage cut-back.

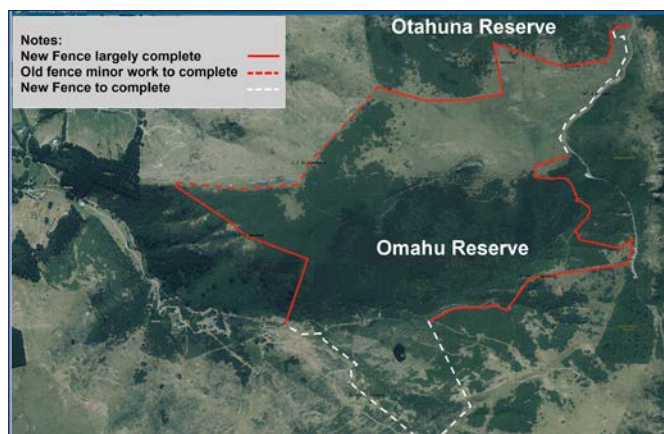
Thanks once again to our team of regular volunteers who turn out every second Friday.

Ian Johnston

Omahu Feral Animal Management Programme

The Gama Foundation gifted Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock to the Society in 2010 and late in 2019 agreed to pay for new or improved fencing along the boundaries of this 146-hectare Reserve to help protect it from wandering feral pigs and deer. Otahuna Reserve to the north of the grazing block has also initiated work on fencing. This combined effort will help to protect approximately 300 hectares of valuable native biodiversity. There are also plans to develop more walking tracks within both reserves and access tracks used for the fencing work can potentially be used for this purpose in the future. Further conceptual planning work is being undertaken on this to use as a basis for consultation.

The original scope of the fencing work expanded in August this year with the inclusion of 2km of new deer fence along the common boundary with Otahuna Reserve. This was largely promoted because the existing stock fence needed to be



Progress of deer fencing at Omaha Bush

replaced and the incremental cost of constructing a deer fence was not that prohibitive given the significant benefit that would be achieved from that type of fence. A reduction in cell size from a single 300-hectare area into two areas of approximately 150 hectares will help to simplify both eradication and future control if re-infestation occurs.

In addition to the installation of new fences, the main access road into the grazing block has been upgraded and several new culverts installed to help protect the tracks and new fences during high intensity rainfall. Old obsolete stock fences are being removed and a new stock fence has been installed from the stock yards to Prendergasts Track to divide the grazing block into two separate areas so that grazing can be alternated between the two areas allowing pasture regrowth.

The Otahuna Boundary fence will be completed this year. It is most likely that any remaining bulk work on the eastern, northern, and western boundaries will also be completed. This leaves a small section of the southern boundary fence to complete and vegetation clearance and ground preparations have already been completed on that line. There will be minor work to complete in the New Year. The aerial photograph shows the deer fence that is in place up to November 2020 (in red) and the remaining fence to complete (in white).

The perimeter length is approximately 8.5 kilometres and some of the fencing work has crossed challenging terrain. We are fortunate to be working with a very experienced fencing contractor to help deal with that.

Graham Corbishley

Omahu Bush Bird Monitoring 2003-2020

As part of wider ornithological monitoring of bush and woodland habitats across the Christchurch City, the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula, Omaha Bush has been monitored three times over the last 17 years: 2003-2004; 2007-2008 and 2019-2020. Originally two transects (now three) are walked and all birds seen or heard are counted within a 20m-wide corridor. These transects are walked along existing tracks (Kirks and Prendergasts) with surveys conducted once per month for twelve consecutive months.

This data really gives a picture of where native bush populations were in the decade and a half prior to the new Predator Free Port Hills initiative when predator control efforts were in place but of light to moderate intensity. The 2019-2020 data can be seen as a baseline, commencing before the effects of the recently up-scaled predator control work had an emphatic impact. The key surveys will be the next one (scheduled for about 2023 or 2024) and the one after that (c.2030). These should hopefully show a strong resurgence in native bush bird populations.

Key findings from 2003-2004 to 2019-2020 for native bush birds were:

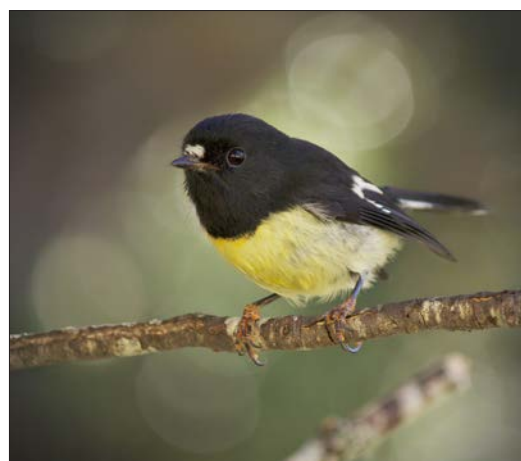
- Kererū, Tomtit, Bellbird all increased in numbers between 2003-2004 and 2019-2020. Kererū showed a breeding season increase in Omaha B and a post-breeding/autumn increase in Omaha C —which probably reflects them moving from dispersed breeding territories to flock together at prime seasonal food sources. Bellbird and Tomtit showed a consistent post-breeding increase which I consider indicative of improved chick/fledgling survival. This has likely come about due to pest animal control leading to lowered predation pressures and improved forest habitat condition.
- Silvereve were remarkably stable from 2003-2004 to 2007-2008 and showed a small increase to 2020.
- Grey Warbler and Fantail showed declines between 2003-2004 and 2019-2020. This may be related to winter mortality rather than predation as they suffer heavy mortality in prolonged snowfall events and these occur every few years.
- Shining Cuckoo didn't show a definite pattern and, being international migrants, there are likely many factors external to conditions in Omaha Bush that impact population size.

Andrew Crossland

CCC Parks Biodiversity Team



Ngā Manu Images



TIMOTHY MUSSON

Linda Woods Reserve

Work continues on the management plan for Linda Woods Reserve and in particular on its planting plan. We are very grateful to John Marsh, retired landscape architect, who has spent many hours walking the Reserve and planning out potential tracks and planting areas.

The draft management plan should be ready by the middle of 2021. We intend to hold a members' workshop at that time to report on progress and seek feedback.

Recently our focus has been on applying for funding for a planting programme in Avoca Valley. We hope to get started in winter 2021. The Avoca Valley catchment is a priority for the Board. Twenty-five years ago, a group of local residents and landowners, tangata whenua, experts and the Christchurch City Council worked together to develop a plan to restore Avoca Valley Stream. This document is available to read on Lucas Associates' website.

Although the upper sections of the stream run dry for much of the year now, this was not always the case. Older residents remember eels and frogs being present and speak fondly of playing in the stream as children. The Avoca Valley catchment was a key route for Ngāti Wheke on their journey from Rāpaki to Ihutai (the Estuary) and was an important source of mahinga kai (food gathering).



Avoca Valley in Linda Woods Reserve

Many of the restoration works outlined in the plan were undertaken, including the development of a small wetland area in Duncan Park and planting alongside the stream flowing through urban backyards. However, the planned planting in the upper catchment did not eventuate due to funding constraints and later the earthquakes. With little vegetation to hold or slow runoff, rainfall falls out of the system within a matter of hours. Stormwater runoff carries sediment from the eroding land into the stream and to the lower catchment, resulting in problems with sedimentation. This affects the water quality in the lower sections of the stream and in turn the Ōpawaho/Heathcote River and the Estuary.

Of course, the upper catchment is now part of Linda Woods Reserve and we are determined to see this plan through. Eventually we hope to restore 33 hectares of bush to the valley.

We have also completed the rockfall remediation work in Avoca Valley and will undertake the rest of the remediation early in 2021. Thank you to our volunteer spotters for assisting with sentry duties and to the Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust for funding the work.

Thanks as well to the Eastenders who have removed over 40 nassella tussock plants from the Reserve.

Marie Gray & Bill Woods



Trap building in Diamond Harbour

Predator Free Port Hills

Predator Free Port Hills continues to grow. We have held a number of face to face and virtual events over the last six months, including community events, stalls at market days and trapping workshops. Highlights included a Zoom workshop with Predator Free Dunedin, a stall at the Whaka-Ora Healthy Harbour showcase, a backyard trapping workshop in St Martins, and two community trap building days.

We have now transitioned most of our trapping data from Trap NZ to our new website. This site has been developed pro bono by GIS in Conservation Volunteers. It is similar to reporting systems used by Predator Free groups in Wellington, Hamilton and Dunedin. For the first time, we can all see what is happening across the entire Port Hills and Lyttelton Harbour!

We are encouraging all our trappers to map their traps and log their catches. This helps build up a picture of trapping across the Port Hills and Lyttelton Harbour and identifies hotspots and gaps. The more people report, the more we can see the difference we are making and the more others are inspired to get started with backyard and community trapping. So if you are living on the Port Hills and are trapping in your backyard, please register via our website so we can count your results too.

We also launched our campaign, **Sign Up Your Neighbour**, to encourage our existing trappers to refer their friends and neighbours to Predator Free Port Hills. Our goal is one in five households trapping across the Port Hills, with thriving populations of native birds, lizards and invertebrates in our backyards and neighbourhoods.

In other exciting news, Pest Free Banks Peninsula received \$5.1 million from Predator Free 2050. This funding will focus on Kaitōrete and the extended Wildside areas. Eradication plans are currently being developed. As predator control work ramps up on the Peninsula, our work becomes even more important as the Port Hills will provide a buffer zone from the Peninsula to the city.

If you would like to be kept updated about Predator Free Port Hills, please like our Facebook page. We post regular updates including news, events and tips and tricks on trapping. You can also email Marie to be added to our mailing list for the e-newsletter. marie@predatorfreeporthills.org.nz

Marie Gray & Jeremy Agar

www.predatorfreeporthills.org.nz

Purchase of Mt Herbert & Mt Bradley



The Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust has recently announced they have signed an agreement to purchase 500ha of land above Orton Bradley Park. The land includes the two highest peaks in the Christchurch area, Mt Herbert/Te Ahu Pātiki and Mt Bradley. The area will be protected in perpetuity with full public access and managed to enable the natural regeneration of native vegetation.

This project will help fulfil Harry Ell's vision for public access across Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills. It is a rare opportunity to acquire a further 500ha and in turn create a contiguous corridor of 1700ha of protected land.

Harry Ell dreamed of a route between Gebbies Pass and Hilltop. He walked this route, as did many others from Christchurch, staying at the Sign of the Packhorse and tramping onwards to Akaroa. A road was never completed and the route became essentially impassable. However, in 2016, Te Ara Pātaka, the Summit Walkway, was opened. The purchase of Te Ahu Pātiki would ensure public access for the last remaining section of private land on the Te Ara Pātaka walkway. Most importantly, this access would be protected for future generations.

The Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust is crowdfunding to raise the balance of money required. If you are able to contribute, please donate through the Christchurch Foundation website. Every bit counts!



<https://christchurchfoundation.org.nz/giving/project/te-ahu-patiki>



Adventures on Quail Island

by Marie Gray



Ōtamahua/Quail Island is a great place to visit this summer. Rich in history, it is an amazing example of ecological restoration. Here is my bucket list of things to do on the island:

- ☀️ Visit the summit to see the new pou whenua which was installed and blessed by Ngāti Wheke last year. From the summit, you have a spectacular view of the harbour and the Port Hills.
- ☀️ Walk the loop track around the island. Try to time your walk for low tide so you can see the ships' graveyard. Keep an eye out for skinks in the long grass beside the tracks.



- ☀️ Go for a swim on Whakamaru Beach. This is a gentle sheltered beach and a great spot for a picnic lunch.
- ☀️ Stay in the new Ōtamahua Hut. The old caretaker's cottage has been refurbished into a modern 12-bunk Department of Conservation hut. Kererū regularly perch in the trees outside. Bookings are essential.



- ☀️ Visit the quarantine barracks on Whakamaru Beach. The barracks now serve as an interpretation centre with information about the history and geology of the island.
- ☀️ Marvel at the ecological restoration that is taking place. The Ōtamahua/Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust recently planted their 100,000th tree! The island is also free of predators (with the exception of mice which are notoriously hard to eradicate).
- ☀️ Visit the replica dog kennels and a replica leprosy patient's hut built by students of Cathedral College. New Zealand's only leprosy colony was established on Quail Island in 1906. The island was also used to quarantine and train dogs and ponies for Scott and Shackleton's expeditions.
- ☀️ Laze on the beach and watch the noisy oystercatchers hunt for food. The island was once a rich source of kai and resources for Ngāi Tahu. They would visit often to collect shellfish, harakeke, birds' eggs and other foods. Ōtamahua means the place where children collect seabird eggs.

Summer is the perfect time to explore our own backyard and what better place to start than the jewel of Lyttelton Harbour. Black Cat Cruises visit the island daily over the school holidays.



No doubt you will have seen the recent publicity about the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust and its purchase of a substantial area of land on the peninsula, incorporating the summits of Mt Herbert/Te Ahu Pātiki and Mt Bradley. We were delighted to pledge a donation towards this as it formed part of Harry Ell's vision for the Port Hills. As we said in our letter of support, 'We see this purchase as a once in a lifetime opportunity'.

Closer to home, and perhaps not surprisingly, post-earthquake problems became apparent on the Society's Linda Woods Reserve. Further geotechnical surveys identified some rockfall hazards, and as in the case of Ohinetahi Reserve, remediation is essential for safety reasons with some urgency attached. Given the timing, normal sources of funding through grants would have proved difficult, so the Trustees agreed to fund the remediation work by professional contractors. The work in Avoca Valley has already been carried out and additional work should be completed in the New Year.

Both of the above situations are illustrations of how the Trust can use its resources to help with the protection of the Port Hills and to further Harry Ell's vision for the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula.

'Where there is a will, there is a way'

Have you considered making a lasting gift to the community at large? A gift that the both the community and visitors from afar can enjoy for generations? The rural land of the Port Hills is Christchurch's signature. Once hill land is subdivided and built on, the attached rural vista and recreational values are lost.

The Summit Road Society established The Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust to provide a safe haven for legacies and donations, separate from the generic funds of the Society. Trust funds can be used to facilitate the purchase and protection of Port Hills land, along with the maintenance of existing facilities.

Substantial legacies and donations have made possible the purchasing of Ohinetahi and Linda Woods Reserves by the Society. Omahu Reserve and Gibraltar Rock Reserve were both gifted by the Gama Foundation. The Trust is a registered charity, (CC27183), dependent on donations and bequests, with the sole purpose of furthering Harry Ell's vision for the Port Hills.

John Goodrich

Chairperson

Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust