

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views February 2003

Check the web site to keep up-to-date with events: www.owb.co.nz

Please book for all seminars and walks at the Treehouse on (04) 499 1400

Meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane for all events.

DIARY

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Saturday 1 March
9.30am to 11am | Plant care work party
<i>Leaders: Bronwen Wall, Jonathan Kennett, ph 472 5891</i> |
| Tuesday 4 March
7.30 pm | March Seminar Series
<i>Dr. George Gibbs:-</i>
“The Demon Grasshoppers and other Insects.” |
| Sunday 9 March
2 pm | Stepping out: Jungle walk
Stout footwear recommended
<i>Leader: Dr John Dawson</i> |
| Tuesday 11 March
7.30 pm | March Seminar Series
<i>Barbara Mitcalfe:-</i> “Magic Maggots – enchanting glow worms” |
| Sunday 16 March
2 pm | Stepping out: Upstarts in the Bush
Stout footwear recommended
<i>Leader: Dr John Dawson</i> |
| Tuesday 18 March
7.30 pm | March Seminar Series
<i>Bill Winstanley:-</i>
Devil’s Darning Needles, Snakefeeders, and Horse Stingers: the bizarre world of dragonflies” |
| Sunday 23 March
2 pm | Wellington’s hidden Kauri forest
Stout footwear recommended
<i>Leader: Dr John Dawson</i> |
| Tuesday 25 March
7.30 pm | March Seminar Series
<i>Ian St. George:-</i> Native Orchids. |
| Saturday 5 April
9.30am to 11am | Plant care work party
<i>Leaders: Bronwen Wall, Jonathan Kennett, ph 472 5891</i> |
| Sunday 27 April
2 pm | Sunday walk over the Blue Trail
Stout footwear recommended
<i>Leader: Dr John Dawson</i> |
| Thursday 1 May
7.30 pm | Otari Wilton’s Bush Trust Annual General Meeting |

CALL FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE OTARI- WILTON'S BUSH TRUST BOARD

The Annual General Meeting is not too far off – Thursday, May 1st. We are eager to have a good range of candidates for election to the Board. If you have ideas about how our wonderful Bush Reserve and Native Botanic Garden could be made even better, and would like to be involved in the developments over the coming years, this is your chance,

You will need to be nominated and seconded by two members of the Trust and should also provide information about yourself, including why you are interested in Otari-Wilton's Bush and information about any qualifications or skills which could be useful for one or more of our varied activities.

If you would like to discuss this before making a decision contact any member of the Board.

To obtain nomination forms, please apply to: The Secretary, Margaret Crimp Ph.4753263

ST. GEORGE AND HIS N.Z DRAGONS: SOME PLANTS, SOME PLANTEATERS, AND SOME PLANTEATER EATERS.

You all know about the trees and the plant collections! This is your chance to hear about some of the lesser known inhabitants of Otari-Wilton's Bush. Come along to the Otari Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane, 160 Wilton Road, each Tuesday evening in March at 7.30pm to hear the following fascinating talks:

- March 4 Dr. George Gibbs:- “The Demon Grasshoppers and other Insects.”
March 11 Barbara Mitcalfe:- “Magic Maggots: the enchanting world of glow worms”
March 18 Bill Winstanley:- “Devil's Darning Needles, Snakefeeders, and Horse Stingers: the bizarre world of dragonflies”
March 25 Ian St. George:- Native Orchids.

Bookings for these interesting evenings can be made at the Treehouse. Phone 499 1400

There will be a gold coin donation.

To contact the Trust Board:

Address: Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, 160 Wilton Road, Wilton, Wellington

Chairman Bill Winstanley, Ph: (04) 478 6178 Email: winstanley@xtra.co.nz
Secretary Margaret Crimp, Ph: (04) 475 3263 Email: m.crimp@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer Glenn Denby, Ph: (04) 475 8438 Email: denbysahar@internet.co.nz

A Cunning Plan

By the 11th January we were sweating. In fact most of Wellington was. The tar was bubbling on Wilton Road and the Kaiwharawhara valley was shimmering in the heat. After 18 dry, northwesterly days the soil was turning to dust and 10% of the plants in the revegetation sites were wilting.

We needed a plan. Preferably a cunning plan with plenty of cunning back up plans. First. we would borrow all our neighbours' hoses and connect them from Jocks place, through the bush, to each site (hopefully he doesn't have a water meter). If he did have a water meter, we would instead connect my Mums long forgotten exercycle to a water pump and pedal water out of the stream – I'm sure most joggers would be interested in a little cross training. And if all else failed, we'd call 111 and ask the Fire Service to test their high pressure hoses from the end of Shropshire Ave – after all, it was an emergency.

The following day it bucketed down. Real rain. The sort that most people whinge about, but growers love. Certainly the trees loved it, and so did the weeds. Both are looking fantastic. So if you'd like to check out the seedlings, and pull out some weeds at the same time, come along to the next Plant Care Work Party. We meet at 9:30am on the first Saturday of every month. Hope to see you there.

Bronwen Wall and Jonathan Kennett

Volunteer Co-ordinator's Report

The volunteer programme at Otari-Wilton's Bush is scheduled to go through some changes this year. Initially these are going to involve a new health and safety plan and a training plan.

Currently the volunteers working for Parks and Gardens are quite segregated. I aim to provide more interaction and continuity between the volunteer groups. One possibility is to have a newsletter for all the Parks and Gardens volunteers that will keep everyone involved in what the other groups are doing.

By pooling resources Council can provide superior training and events for volunteers from areas such as Otari-Wilton's Bush, Wellington Botanic Garden and the Volunteer Rangers. Training will include basic first aid, conflict resolution and various aspects of flora and fauna, both native and introduced.

By streamlining the general training, volunteers will have more opportunity to work in other areas if they desire. I believe everyone will benefit from being more involved with the wider group efforts that go on within the parks and gardens of Wellington City.

Myfanwy Hill
Volunteer Co-ordinator

Report from Bill Winstanley, Chairman

It is delightful on this occasion to report on another significant achievement for the Trust. The viewing platform at the Wilton's Bush waterfall has been completed and is now available for the public to enjoy.

From concept to completion has taken about three years and a number of setbacks had to be overcome along the way. What we now have is a great symbol of what the Trust can do best: in close cooperation with council staff, to provide needed facilities in Otari-Wilton's Bush that council funding will not cover.

An initial impediment to the project was the lack of planning and design skills within the Trust Board. The enthusiasm of Jane Wright and Tony Williams overcame that. Tony arranged for Senior Landscape Architect Charles Gordon to produce the necessary plans. Armed with the plans, there was then the need for the finances to put the project into effect.

We were fortunate that the Community Trust of Wellington and the Ron Greenwood Environmental Trust saw value in the proposal and became the major sponsors of the project. We are very grateful to them and other contributors for their generous support.

Even with plans and funding, things do not just happen. We are grateful, too, that Athol Swann took on the task of project coordinator. Athol recruited builder John Heaven to erect the viewing platform and also led the small team of volunteers who, with some help from Otari-Wilton's Bush staff, looked after the associated track excavation and formation, tree moving, and fencing that has completed the project.

Completion of the project gave us a grand opportunity to raise the profile of Otari-Wilton's Bush. The scheme started as glow-worm viewing platform but the imagination of many people was captured by the knowledge of the dragonfly habitat protected by fencing off the stream: that story first featured in the Nelson Evening Mail on 5 February. The real delights, however, are the enhanced view of the several levels of the waterfall and the proximity achieved to the diversity of native vegetation alongside the ramp to the viewing platform.

Souvenir Bookmark Imminent

Hopefully, by the time our next newsletter is issued, we will have a souvenir bookmark on sale.

It has been proposed that the bookmark will have four colour photographs of Otari/Wilton's Bush attractions including the canopy walkway, native plants, and native birds. The rear of the souvenir will give details of Otari/Wilton's Bush attractions, opening hours, how to reach the reserve, and guided tours.

The bookmark will be laminated to make it durable and it should make a useful complement to the range of cards we have for sale.

Otari-Wilton's Bush Staff Report

We have all experienced a hectic last few months at Otari-Wilton's Bush. Our reveg production line has been in full swing with staff and volunteers tubed up over 4,000

seedlings and have potted even more into milk cartons. Needless to say our little nursery is bulging but we are grateful to volunteers who not only did a lot of this work but have kindly allowed us to store plants at their homes. The Botanic Garden is baby-sitting about 1500 milk cartons as well. The revegetation sites, planted over the past couple of years, look fantastic, a result of regular maintenance parties led by Jonathan and Bronwen and weekend volunteers.

We have enjoyed a fairly good growing season so far. Things are drying out now but the forest still looks ok, even so, there is a total fire ban in place for Wellington now. The upgrades to the Generic Borders are still continuing and the recently planted Hebe border has established well and is ready to receive some more labels. About 300 plant labels are being printed now to go into these collections.

Some of you may have attended the launch of the Crimson Trail for the Wellington Region held at Otari-Wilton's Bush. It went really well and we had some good feedback from those who enjoyed the antics for Ruud Kleinpaste and company. It is great to see rata being promoted in the Wellington area. The great photo on the front of the Crimson Trail pamphlet was taken by Tim of his nephew admiring our rata in the Wild Garden.

We are delighted with the new viewing platform down at the Waterfall and I really want to congratulate the Trust on having the vision and, most of all, stamina to see this project through to completion. It is a real asset to that area and an excellent example of what can be achieved when we work together. There had been genuine concern expressed about the general safety of that area by guides, staff here, and many users, and also concern at the threat to the habitat of glow-worms and the breeding colony of giant dragonflies. Now the dragonflies will be wondering what happened as their habitat can begin to repair itself, no longer subjected to trampling feet. It will be good to see how quickly native vegetation is able to regenerate there as well. We will be installing interpretative information on the platform at some stage in the near future and will most likely do it in conjunction with an upgrade of the rest of the interpretative information at Otari-Wilton's Bush.

Expect to see some action along the Circular Walkway from the North Picnic ground to the Troup Picnic ground as some health and safety issues are addressed. We will be installing handrails, defining the track edge and resurfacing the track to provide safer access for everyone and make that area easier for us to maintain. Work is likely to start in autumn and be completed before June. We may not be able to do all the work at once so will do the worst areas first and each year chip away at a bit more.

Around the same time we hope to undertake another stage of the Canopy Walkway project that was not done in 1998 because of a lack of funding. We have been allocated some money to construct a boardwalk in to the rimu stand closest to the Wild Garden. Will have to keep you all posted on that one.

So lots happening and it's all good.

Please keep dropping in your used milk cartons – washed and uncrushed!

Jane Wright and Otari-Wilton's Bush staff

Otari Pathways

Before 1950 the backdoor to Otari was very much the front door. Guides, scouts, Bible classes, and visitors to the bush all trekked from Wadestown Tram Terminus to Blackbridge Road, then to Wilton's Bush Road, and re-gathered at the Gresley Lukin Alpine Garden. Many had stopped to throw sticks into the stream from Blackbridge. It was a long walk up hill to get home.

Wading the stream gave access to the best blackberries in the valley. The swampy paddock, now the North Picnic Ground was marked by a giant karaka. We had fourteen opossum traps above the Farm Road, now Churchill Drive. There were trout under the west bank. A path from the North Picnic Ground, to Chartwell School is now on my wish list.

The Alpine Garden was marked with a marble plaque on a large triangular stone. I've crawled among the discarded rocks looking for the plaque. I hope it's in a Council store somewhere, it deserves to be returned.

On The Circular Path there were some rhododendrons to be admired and quite the largest tree in the bush-a gigantic gum, white blossom I think. It stood just where the car park now sits. It went the way of all exotics. Past the Curtis's cow paddock on Wilton Road, there was a waterwheel.

Most visitors chose to push on into the bush. Young parents often stopped at the "little picnic ground". This was an open triangle of grass at the foot of the path to The Flax Clearing. The pond, where young children could swim and splash is still there. Darwin's stone is still very evident though now silted in on the west side. The "little pipe", where the faint hearted learnt the art of pipe-walking is now blocked by second growth and triangular barriers.

Troup Picnic Ground is little altered. The fireplaces have gone, and "the pipe" is well barricaded to prevent any foot traffic. To scoot across the (sewer) "pipe" was indeed the main attraction to young visitors and even to the occasional school teacher and scout master. The nervous could always go by the bridge and pretend to drink from the tap-the only "safe" water in the bush. Beyond ran the path to the cemetery, and the dances at the Standen Street Masonic Hall.

Each entrance to the bush was marked by one of those formidable notices listing the dozens of things forbidden. I only remember "No hawkers", and "No camping" and of course "No games on Sunday". I hope there is a photo in existence.

Stan Reid's 1934 map shows a well defined Blue Trail. The trail was usually joined from a spectacular track up a stream bed at the south end of the Blue Trail. Its top can still be seen just before the Blue Trail divides for the cemetery. The bottom end has just been cleared by the valley re-planters. From memory you walked under a waterfall. There were three waterfall tracks in the bush, then it was straight up Jacob's Ladder-there were two Jacob's ladders. Top of The Blue Trail opened directly on to farmland and a short climb to The Rock-the outcrop on the main ridge north of Johnston Hill. From the top, The Blue Trail wandered down through the remains of a large burn towards the Big Rimu. You walked anywhere, often driving a small mob of sheep ahead. Just beyond the rimu, what is now the Yellow Trail, led to a broken fence and farmland? Big patches of ongaonga-probably *Urtica ferox* led to dares and excitement.

Besides Archibald's Farm, three ridges gave access to the farmland beyond and the main ridge. Until quite recently large, burnt, branches and trunks littered the hillside. On the flat table tops (Cotton's dissected peneplain) there was much to do, lighting campfires and enjoying the views of the bush, and Cook Strait, and you were on the road to Makara..

J.L.R.

Well-Prized Walks

In the period 29 November 2002 to 5 February 2003, the volunteer guides have accompanied 8 different groups, comprising about 253 people, on guided walks around Otari-Wilton's Bush. Two of the walks were the regular Trust walks that take place on the fourth Sunday of each month. The rest were booked tours.

One of the booked tours was part of the Project Crimson launch of the Crimson Trail. About 40 people joined John Dawson and myself on a walk around a number of the rata species we have growing in Otari. NZ Herald readers would have seen an article about this event the following day but, for some strange reason, it did not feature locally.

Two of the tours were for overseas groups: a party of Chinese botanists and a group of gardening enthusiasts from the United States of America. The latter group was from an organisation that has arranged tours of Otari several times over recent years. Repeat tours are a valuable compliment.

Our largest tour (54 people) was for the Department of Conservation, Wanganui. This is, again, a regular visit as part of that Department's "Summer Nature Programme". Several participants made favourable comments in comparing our tours with others elsewhere in Wellington and I was flattered to receive the following email from the tour organiser:

"Belated thanks to you and your team for the excellent guided tours provided during our visit last Tuesday. The feedback was excellent and everyone really enjoyed it. We will definitely be interested in returning next year. I will allow a little more time perhaps next year, as it seemed we had to leave you in a hurry. The weather was lovely and it truly is a remarkable spot right in the heart of the capital."

It is nice to be appreciated!

The numbers in our regular walks swelled when the Wellington City Council decided to reward people who made the effort to contribute to the Wadestown/Onslow /Wilton Community Planning Study. What a wonderful idea it was to offer guided walks in Otari/Wilton's Bush as prizes for the individual inputs. Those participants seemed to really enjoy their treat.

Every participant goes away as an ambassador for the reserve. Many thanks to the guides who assisted with the tours in this period.

*Bill Winstanley,
Volunteer Guide Co-ordinator*

Polluting Otari-Wilton's Bush Streams

On Saturday 8 February, I was hosting for the afternoon in Otari-Wilton's Bush. As I went on my rounds replenishing the brochures on the information boards, I was shocked to find that the stream feeding the waterfall had turned milky and frothy for all of its length. I immediately telephoned the pollution hotline for Greater Wellington- The Regional Council, 496 734 to report the problem. I am pleased to say that there was a rapid response from the duty Pollution Control Officer but he was unable to trace the source of the pollution.

The pollution continued through Sunday but, again, it was not possible to trace the pollution source, even with the help of Wellington City Council staff. I was subsequently advised by city council staff that I should have contacted the council 24 hour phone, 499 4444, as soon as the pollution was detected.

I am told that pollution events in the streams that flow through the reserve are not uncommon and even faecal contamination occurs from time to time. It is fairly disgusting that urban streams can be used as part of the sewerage system, particularly those flowing through a reserve of national and international significance. As the council reviews its services to the Wilton area, perhaps sewerage and stormwater control should be given some prominence.

'Must See' v 'Great Outdoors'

Avid readers of the City Directory 2003 will have noted that the Botanic Garden and Bolton Street Cemetery feature in the list of attractions that visitors to the capital 'must see'. You can see them all dying to see the cemetery. Meanwhile, poor old Otari-Wilton's Bush, despite being recognised by council staff as a facility of national and international significance, is relegated to a small space in the 'Great Outdoors' section. I imagine that description may be off-putting, particularly to older visitors to Wellington.

Never mind. At least the brochure for the Crimson Trail Wellington treats Otari better. The Crimson Trail for Otari-Wilton's Bush is the only one in Wellington ranked as a 'must do'. Thanks for the recognition, Project Crimson and DoC.

*Bill Winstanley,
Volunteer Guide Co-ordinator*

Washed unsquashed milk cartons

Milk cartons are ideal for planting out tree seedlings. If you can help by donating used cartons, please leave them in the bins under the deck at the Information Centre.

OTARI - WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

Membership Application Form

Our membership year is from 1 April to 31 March. New members joining after 1 February will have the membership accredited to the following year. Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter and receive notification of all forthcoming activities at Otari - Wilton's Bush.

I wish to join the Trust

(name of new member)

Postal Address

.....

.....

Telephone ().....(Home) E-mail.....

Billing Name and Address

(if different from above)

Subscription:	Double/Family	\$15	<input type="text"/>
	Individual	\$10	<input type="text"/>
	Student/Unwaged	\$5	<input type="text"/>

Donation: \$

Total (please enclose your cheque)
Payment \$
:

The Trust is registered as a Charitable organisation and donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible. We will automatically send you a receipt for tax purposes. We regret we cannot process payments by Credit Card.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please indicate the areas of interest to you from the following list:

- Work parties
- Weekend hosting at Otari Information Centre
- Fund raising

Please send your application to: The Treasurer
Otari Wilton's Bush
160 Wilton Road
Wilton
Wellington